1921
M621

The person charging this material is responsible for its return to the library from which it was withdrawn on or before the **Latest Date** stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

BUILDING USE ONLY

MAY 3 - 1974

MAY - 3

L161 — O-1096

AD

A.

Submitted in Part for the

IN ENGLISH

IN

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1921

CHAUCER'S PLOTS

BY

ADAH ELIZABETH MILLIGAN

A. B. Monmouth College, 1914

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

IN ENGLISH

IN

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1921

1921
M621

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

April 22 1921

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY ADAH ELIZABETH MILLIGAN

ENTITLED CHAUCER'S PLOTS

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

H. S. V. Jones
In Charge of Thesis

Stuart P. Sherman
Head of Department

Recommendation concurred in*

Committee on Final Examination*

*Required for doctor's degree but not for master's

493503

Contents

Chapter		Page
	Introduction	1
I	The Vision Poems	3
	Introduction	3
	The Book of the Duchess	10
	The Parliament of Fowls	16
	The House of Fame	21
	The Legend of Good Women	27
II	Troilus and Criseyde	35
III	The Canterbury Tales	45
	The General Plan	45
	Types of Mediaeval Narratives	
	Romance of Chivalry--The Knight's Tale	56
	Lay--The Franklin's Tale	66
	Fabliau--The Chipman's Tale	75
	Miracles of the Virgin--The Prioress' Tale	80
	Fable--The Nun's Priest's Tale . . .	86
	Exemplum--The Pardoner's Tale . . .	93
IV	Conclusion	100
	Bibliography	102

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

https://archive.org/details/chaucersplots00mill

Introduction

Geoffrey Chaucer, one of the greatest story tellers in English literature, was gradually and variously prepared for his literary work. In his early years, England under the leadership of Edward III was carrying on commercial wars with France and under succeeding kings continued the struggle for almost a century. The English people, in spite of national hatreds enjoyed the courtly literature of contemporary France. But as the foreign war continued, they became increasingly willing to lend an ear to stories of English life. And Chaucer was the poet capable of entertaining them with tales of this kind. His study of human nature began in his childhood. He was a page of the daughter-in-law of Edward III and while associating with the nobility, he acquired a taste for depicting courtly life. In 1359 he was taken prisoner in France but was ransomed by the King and made a valet of the royal chambers. Several years later, having been sent on diplomatic missions abroad, Chaucer visited Italy. There he was inspired by Italian literature. But he did not settle down as a "poetic dreamer". During twelve years, for example, he was engaged as a comptroller of customs for London. Coming thus in close touch with high and low, Chaucer was afforded the broad and intimate knowledge of life which makes his plots charming for all time.

In order to do justice to his plots it is impossible to consider them apart from his living characters. We marvel at his fine discrimination in borrowing from his French, Italian, and English sources. He shifts the order of details and rejects much material so that he will be able to picture the motives of the knight, the friar, or the miller, whom he has known. With the skill of an expert he selects in

each case what he needs to attain his realistic and dramatic purpose.

We may now take up the sources and original material in Chaucer's plots to see how artful he is in securing unity, coherence, and proportion. As we pass from his early vision poems,--the "Book of the Duchesse," the "Parlement of Foules", the "Hous of Fame," and the "Legend of Good Women" to his longest poem, "Troilus and Criseyde", and then to representative types of mediaeval literature in the "Canterbury Tales", we should be impressed with the steady and rapid development of Chaucer's surprisingly resourceful narrative art.

Chapter I

The Vision Poems

That Chaucer should adopt the fiction of a dream in the "Book of the Duchesse", the "Parlement of Foules", the "Hous of Fame", and the prologue to the "Legend of Good Women" need not here be explained; for the dream was a favorite literary device of his age as well as the age preceding and the one following. Neither does the fact that he borrowed without hesitation need any explanation; for the crime of plagiarism was unknown in the Middle Ages; in truth, each author took what he needed from others. What does interest us in our present discussion is how Chaucer assimilates his borrowed material to suit his particular purpose. This consideration brings us at once to the Old French vision-poems. The following summaries[1] of a few representative types to which Chaucer frequently alludes will give us the usual setting, guides, courts, goddesses, gods, and the purpose of the dream.

Let us begin with "Le Roman de la Rose" of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, a poem which directly or indirectly has had a very great influence upon Chaucer and other writers of love visions.

It opens with a discourse on dreams. The author's belief in dreams has been strengthened by Scipio's dream. While asleep in bed one May night, the poet dreams that he is wandering in a garden, on the walls of which are painted ten hideous figures. He knocks at the wicket. The gate is at once opened by Idleness, a beautiful damsel, and she leads him to the owner of the garden, Mirth. In the distance

(1) For these I have been greatly indebted to Professor Neilson's "The Origins and Sources of the Court of Love", and Professor Sypherd's "Studies in Chaucer's House of Fame."

the god of Love approaches with his companion, Beauty. And behind the hero, Cupid with his good and bad quivers, follows. When the dreamer is viewing the story of Narcissus and admiring the rosebuds in a fountain, he is wounded by Cupid's good darts. Thenceforth, he becomes a vassal of Love. Immediately he has a great desire to possess the particular rose-bud on which he has set his heart. After repeated trials he is permitted to kiss the rose. Then reason approaches and talks on the folly of Love and the fickleness of Fortune. The dreamer, having listened to the miseries of the present, and a tirade against marriage is soon met by the god of Love, who promises him assistance. When the forces of Love have sworn fealty, Nature enters her workshop. Venus finally arrives to direct the attack on the tower where the lover's friend is confined. At this point Jean de Meun makes the distinction between Venus as the goddess of sensual love, and her son as the god of "l'amour au coeur."

In Froissart's "Paradys d'Amour" to which we may next turn the poet invokes Morpheus, Juno, and Oleus to send him a messenger of sleep. With the arrival of the messenger the poet falls asleep and dreams of a wood brightened with a flowery landscape and singing birds. Two ladies, Plaisance and Esperance, approach the hero who is almost a despairing lover. Giving much information they conduct him to the pavilion of the god of Love. On their way they associate with Beau Semblant, Doulo Regard, Franc Vouloir, and other huntsmen engaged in "l'amoureuse chace". The god of Love greets the poet kindly, and commands the guides now to lead him on through the wood. By the side of a stream they find Bel Acueil plaiting chaplets of flowers. The

poet immediately kneels before his lady and begs her to love him. She permits him to kiss the chaplet and then she kisses it herself and places it upon his head. In the midst of his joy he awakes with thanks to Morpheus through whom all true lovers are comforted in sleep.

The relation of Machaut to the love-lorn prince of "Le Dit de la Fontaine" and the introduction there of the story of Ceyx and Alcyone make that poem of significance for our study. The poem begins with the poet awakening at the sound of a sad voice. He writes down the tender complaint that it carries. Among other things it includes the story of Ceyx and Alcyone. Soon Machaut finds the singer and learns that he is singing in obedience to his lord whose advances have been unfavorable to his lady. Together the two seek the unhappy lover and find him a gentleman, handsome, amiable, and like the son of a king; and then they go into a garden where there is a magnificent fountain of crystal adorned with bas-reliefs representing the stories of Narcissus and of the rape of Helen. Having heard the confidence of the lover, the three fall asleep. Venus appears in a dream to tell them the story of the Judgment of Paris and to promise her protection to the young lord. To the lover comes a gracious vision of his mistress but it vanishes when he awakens. The gentlemen go off on a long journey.

The month and the function of the god of Love are of interest in "Dit du Vergier". It is April when the poet walks down the garden path which leads to a beautiful orchard full of trees, flowers, and singing birds. Lost in amorous reverie, the poet passes through the orchard into a meadow. Here he beholds a vision. Six damsels and

six youths are accompanying a creature of marvelous figure whom they honour as their sovereign and their god. This one explains to the poet his power in making the foolish wise and the wise foolish, the poor rich and so on. He declares his name, tells why he is blind, and reveals the use of his wings and the use of his arrows. The damsels' names are Grace, Pitie, Esperance, Souvenir, Franchise, and Atemperance; the youths' names, Valoir, Doux Penser, Doux Plaisir, Loiauté, Celer, and Desir; and the six adversaries', Dangier, Paour, Honte, Durté, Cruauté, and Doutance. Then in parting the god advises the poet to be loyal and secret in his love and afraid of displeasing his lady.

In the next a few more characters are added for Chaucer besides the idea that the poet attempts to hide himself under a thorn. The poet is thinking of the glories of the spring season in the opening of Deschamps' "Le Lay Amoureux". While he walks in the wood, he meets a tall fellow who is Disdain bearing a cudgel. After a brief conversation the poet passes into a beautiful meadow where there is a spring, a clear stream, and a tall pine tree. Under the latter many people are praying to God to send grace to them, and his love to the world. In the meantime, the poet slips under a thorn to hide and to watch. When the famous lovers from history and legend are leaving, they espy the poet, but instead of harming him they tell the god of Love that he is Eustache who ought to receive his favor. Then the poet awakes.

The allegorical material in Nicole de Margival's "La Panthere d' Amours" furnishes hints for Chaucer which we shall later note. The poet is taken away by birds into a forest full of beasts. One beast is of great beauty and because of her sweet breath all the dragons follow her about. There are sounds of music. Approaching the poet

is a great company dressed in costly garments and honoured by the presence of the god of Love. The latter salutes Nicole and inquires who he is and who sent him. Then the poet recounts the things he has just seen in the forest. After listening courteously the god of Love professes that Nicole should become his vassal. The god of Love reproaches the poet but, nevertheless, he accompanies him to the valley where the poet's lady dwells. Venus offers advice in winning the lady besides giving three companions, Esperance, Dous Penser, and Dous Souvenir to lead him to the palace of Fortune, which is often the model of the mansion in the "Anticlaudianus" of Alanus de Insulis, and the "Roman de la Rose". It is on a hill of ice and is, moreover, half ruinous and half gorgeous. At the gate blind Fortune sits to determine according to her own caprice whether one is welcomed by Eur, who inhabits the part called "Prosperite", or by Meseur, who rules the part called "Adversite". At this moment the goddess being angry sends Nicole to Meseur. Later through the influence of Grace and Bone volenté, he is transferred to Eur's abode where his lady, "la douce panthere" is abiding. Even yet his courage fails him and he has to be supported by the ladies. At last the panther yields to the wishes of her mother Pitié and accepts him. Then the poet awakes.

In "La Fablel Don Dieu d'Amours" the bird's court furnishes another suggestion for our English poet. The poet has a vision that he is walking one bright May morning in a fair garden watered by a clear brook and surrounded by a ditch besides a marvellous wall within which no "vilain" is admitted. Under a tree he sits and listens to singing birds until he almost thinks himself in paradise. The nightingale calls about her the other birds to hear complaints of the degeneration of Love.

The hawk wishes to lay the blame on the "villaine gent", but here the thrush objects to the hawk confining love to clerks and knights. The jay, too, is democratic, and thinks that to love and be well loved is to be as worthy and wise as a clerk. To this the nightingale agrees and dismisses the assembly. The lover left delightless has a second vision. In the midst of his talk with his lady a dragon carries her off. Soon after he has allowed himself to declare the folly of serving the god of Love, he is approached by the god of Love who promises him aid and proceeds to carry the poet to his palace, "Champ Fleuri", supported by pillars representing months. A girl shows the poet the glories of the mansion and later the sights in the meadow beyond the mansion. On their return to the god's abode, they find the god just arrived with the hero's lady. The hero awakes and finds it but a dream.

Another court scene of the birds we have in "La Messe des Oisiaus et le Plais des Chanonesses et des Grises Nonains", of Jean de Condé. The meadows are beautiful with flowers and clear brooks in the month of May. The author dreams that just before dawn he is sitting under a pine in a beautiful forest and is listening to birds singing. Messengers come from the goddess of Love to announce her approach and to call on all the birds to prepare a welcome. Soon a gorgeous throne is set up. Upon this Venus takes her seat to dispense justice and receive adoration. The complaints are postponed until she has dined. The nightingale sings mass and the parrot gives a sermon on the four virtues of lovers, namely, Obedience, Patience, Loyalty, and Hope. After the banquet those who have suits come before the goddess. A company of canonesses present a complaint against the gray nuns for stealing a-

way their lovers. Venus finally sees fit to give the decision in favor of the nuns. They all accept the verdict without a comment.

The "Judgment of the King of Bohemia" furnishes suggestions for Chaucer's lovers as we shall later indicate. One spring morning the poet wanders out into a park filled with beautiful trees and bright blossoms. Seating himself by a brook overshadowed by a tower, he listens to the singing birds in the trees that conceal him. Soon a lady with a maid and a little dog goes past. She meets a knight but passes on without returning his greeting. He overtakes her and again greets her. Then she apologizes for her inattention which her deep thots have occasioned. The knight begs her to tell him the cause of her pensive mood. Perhaps he can comfort her, for he, too, has been having bitter grief. Agreeing to exchange confidences they proceed to relate their sorrows. The lady has lost her husband by death; the knight has found his lady inconstant. The dispute arises over who has the greater loss. The concealed poet then reveals himself and suggests that they submit the question to the King of Bohemia. They both consent to this. The king decides, at last, in favor of the knight.

The stories sketched above illustrate several general characteristics of the love vision poems. The poet may be expected to fall asleep and dream that he is in a flowery meadow, a beautiful wood, or some strange country with singing birds making glad the May morning. Wandering about in this setting he is soon met by a guide who is a lady, a man, a bird, or a beast. Then he is led to a court surrounded by trees, streams, and fountains. The walls of the court or temple are painted with stories of love, history, and mythology. Grouped within and without the hall are courtiers, Danger, Shame, Pity, Delight, Hope, Envy, Despair, and Lust. Cupid with his arrows meets the lover

and shoots his darts. Venus and Fortune seated on their thrones have their usual functions of administering aid and condemnation respectively. The god of Love interviews the hero reproaching or praising him for his service. And so throughout the poems the individuality of no one stands out; for the dream is just a mere device to get the reader into a sort of fairyland, peopled by personified abstractions--Hope, Mercy, Desire, Jealousy, and Despair--or by typical lovers scarcely more concrete than the abstractions themselves. To produce the actual phenomena there was no attempt, but yet, the atmosphere of unreality in a strange country, no doubt, appealed to our forefathers as a welcome relief from the "tumult and ugliness of everyday life."

Chaucer in his delightful versions of the love vision blends reality with these conventional situations. Taking a suggestion here and there from these poems and skilfully applying a situation of his own day, he produces a haunting charm not to be found in the French vision-poems. In our present discussion we shall be especially interested in the abundance of life and the movement which Chaucer has brought within the framework of his stories, how he has modified, retrenched or elaborated the conventional outline bringing into prominence what will contribute to the desired impression, and rejecting whatever will weaken.

The "Book of the Duchesse," Chaucer's first vision poem, in point of constructive art, differs from his predecessors' in that the conventional situation--a dream, a paradise of trees, flowers, birds, a lamenting lover, and an incomparable lady--is applied to a personal elegy. To the conventional setting and personages Chaucer gives a reality not found in the above mentioned French vision-poems. Here,

Chaucer wishing to honor Blanche, the wife of John of Gaunt, detaches himself by a skilful use of the familiar conventions so that instead of praising her himself he has the black knight, her husband, recount her praise. The black knight being her social equal and her companion is the one who can speak without constraint.

The theme of the poem--the bitter grief of the despairing husband who has lost the love of his youth and can think of nothing but her gracious perfections--is suggested in the proem and is cleverly developed step by step from here to the end of the poem. There are two contrasted characters selected to make the plan of the story possible. The dreamer is a man with a child's understanding and a gentle sympathy. He understands nothing, not even the cause of his sleeplessness nor his dream. "Child-like he never reasons but feels and gets impressions". He is touched by Alcyone's vow that she will eat no bread, by the little puppy's fawning on him, and by the lone knight's laments. The other character, the knight, is an adept in courtly conventions.

Let us follow these characters in the story. The poet complains of an insomnia which has deprived him of all joy. One night he has brought to him a romance, the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid. Having read the sorrow of Alcyone, whose husband was lost on the sea voyage; and the power of the god of Sleep, he promises Morpheus a feather bed if he will bring him sleep. Immediately he falls asleep and dreams of a beautiful May morning. The chirping birds awaken him. His room is gilded with sun rays and painted with the text of the "Roman de la Rose". Below his window he hears the sound of a hunting horn and sees a troop of huntsmen going past. He then mounts a horse and follows

them to the forest where Emperor Octavian is hunting. After a long chase the dogs lose the scent. The poet is walking away from the tree, where he has been stationed,when a little puppy comes to him and fawns on him. He tries to catch it but it dashes down a flowery path. Soon he sees a man in black leaning with his back against an oak. This handsome looking knight of about four and twenty is lamenting the death of a peerless lady and is so absorbed that he neither hears nor sees the dreamer. Hardly has he uttered the last words when his blood rushes back to his heart and he turns as pale as death. The poet awkwardly accosts him, and after he has exchanged a few courteous words with the knight, he remarks that the hunt seems to be at an end. To this the knight answers that he has not thought of the hunt. Begged by the poet to tell his sorrow and thereby lighten it, the knight replies that there is no possible alleviation for his woe. His joy has been turned to grief and Fortune has taken away his queen. The poet does not understand his meaning and reproaches him for his deep sorrow which is too great for the cause. Then laying aside his metaphors, he speaks of his early service to the god of Love, his lady's beauty, her eyes, her hair, her frankness, and her harmony and poise. Her merits surpassed those of all other ladies. She rejected his love and devotion. He, despondent, waited a whole year before he came back to her. She knew then that his devotions were genuine. They were married and sweet was their union. "Where is she now?" Chaucer asks for he wishes the knight to unburden his sorrow. "She is dead," he answers. "Is that your lot? My God, it is true," says the poet. The dreamer has no more to say. The huntsmen ride back from the hunt. A bell rings in the castle, and the poet awakes holding in his hand the

story of Alcyone and Ceyx. The dreamer himself in trouble in the beginning because of his insomnia has forgotten his woes, so deeply moved is he in consoling the stranger, and does not remember them when he awakes.

Let us now consider the three divisions of the poem--the sleeplessness of the poet; the hunt; and the grief of the black knight--in their relation to the French poems above summarized.

The prologue, in which is the first division, harmonizes with the poem and gives a companion setting. Chaucer found a suggestion for the mood of his dreamer in "La Paradys d'Amours". Froissart's dreamer is melancholy and therefore cannot sleep. He is a woful lover. This suggested to Chaucer the mood of gentle sorrow for his dreamer which is sustained throughout the "Book of the Duchesse". Froissart, however, does not have this mood pervade his story, for sorrow is not the tone. He, on the contrary, deals with the joy of love, its comforts, and rewards which the god of Love grants to the lover, and makes the "situation and mood of sorrow momentary, external, and evanescent." Chaucer's situation and mood become a part of the dreamer's temperament and serve to unify the different divisions of the poem.

The skilful use of Chaucer's indebtedness to Machant in the prologue is equally interesting. Machant in the "Fontaine Amoureuse" hears one, in obedience to the commands of his lord who has been rejected, singing a complaint embodying the story of Alcyone and Ceyx. The singer closes with an appeal to Morpheus to send him to his lady in a vision so that she seeing his suffering might relent. Then Machant approaches the singer and they seek the lord who tells of his sorrow. They all fall asleep. The lord has a vision of his lady smiling on

him and saying gracious words. Chaucer does not overlook this slight psychological link of cause and effect between the legend of Alcyone and Ceyx and the vision of the lover. Machaut promises a feather bed to Morpheus, and this, too, appeals to Chaucer.

With both of these sources in mind Chaucer draws from them freely. In the summary of the "Book of the Duchesse" we have seen that the mood of gentle sorrow; the gift of a feather bed to Morpheus, and the psychological link between the vision in the prologue and the third division of the poem have been adapted to this particular story. Instead of the laments of a constant wife Chaucer has fashioned the laments of a constant lover. The sad hours of Alcyone have not the realistic turn that the lover's lament has. This we shall refer to later in the discussion of the third division of the poem.

Turning to the hunt we have nothing of any account cited by way of a parallel. And yet in this incident which brings the dreamer from his room, where he falls asleep after invoking Morpheus, to the path in the wood which brings him to the lamenting lover, we have a few minor resemblances to the French poems. Emperor Octavian (368) is mentioned in Machaut's "Jugement dou Roy de Behaigne" and figures in many romantic poems. Chaucer learns who he is from a hunter and then gives the name no further consideration. This meeting of new names happens so in dreams. And so Chaucer's dream is given a touch of probability. The charming picture of the lost puppy is another suggestion from the "Jugement dou Roy de Behaigne" or "Le Dit dou Lyon". Chaucer has the dog act as a guide to lead him to find the black knight. Then the dog is mentioned no more.

Passing now to the third division, the lamenting lover, to which

is devoted about two thirds of the poem we find many hints gathered from Machaut's "Jugement dou Roy de Behaigne" the eighth "Motet", "Remede de Fortune", the "Lay de Comfort", and the "Roman de la Rose". Under Chaucer's pen the conventional lament takes on a personal note not found in his French sources. The lady in "Behaigne" faints after her story of grief is recounted, she, moreover, merely exchanges her confidence with the bereaved lord; the knight in the "Duchesse" turns as pale as death after his lament and later continues his sorrow in a well conceived dialogue. The knight not only lists a conventional inventory of his lady's beauty, but dwells on her hair, and lingers on her eyes, which were open not too wide. Besides, the lover paints her beauty, demeanor, and speech in spasmodical fashion such as is natural in a dream world.

The conclusion of the last division of the poem has been unduly criticised. It is very artistic. Some critics contend that the words, "She is dead", are not fitting for a climax since the dreamer heard the cause of the grief when he first approached the lover. If Chaucer's purpose in writing the lament were to give the dreamer information concerning the grief of the black knight, the supposition is true; but the purpose as we have heard it from the dreamer's own words is not this. The dreamer, though aware of the lament of the death of the lady, begs the knight to tell his sorrows so that the knight thereby, may be comforted. Now in order to take the rôle of a sincere listener the dreamer's instinctive delicacy must hide the knowledge of the lover's bereavement. After a conversation, describing the lady's beauty, poise, dignity, and charitable spirit to a child-like friend as the sole audience; the bare truth in these words, "She is dead," is the only end-

ing that could make the lament complete.

The artlessness or naiveté of Chaucer has given the charm to the whole poem. Chaucer's dreamer, an imaginary fellow, having the appearance of innocence and helplessness, has been skilfully used as a device to bring out the pathos of the personal elegy. And the tone of sadness thus effected lingers with the reader after he has finished the poem.

Chaucer's personality is coming to the surface in his second vision poem, the "Parlement of Foules". The remote suggestions of French and Italian writers and direct borrowings from them are assimilated by Chaucer so that they are made very much his own. They are, moreover, "freshened by his imagination" before they are given back to Chaucer's readers.

His story in machinery and execution is admirable. Again the material from his favorite authors is given a personal application. The story is generally accepted as a courtly compliment to Richard II of England and Anne of Bohemia. It is to celebrate the betrothal of Richard to Anne. The formel represents the Queen. The three tercel eagles were long accepted as Guillaume de Baviere,(1) Friedrich of Meissen, and Richard. The other birds make up the different classes in England--the birds of prey are taken to represent the nobles; the worm-fowls, the bourgeois; the water-fowls, the mercantile class; and the seed-fowl, the agricultural class. These characters are the chief ones in the parliament of birds presided over by the goddess of Nature.

The dreamer was the minor character in the dialogue in the "Book of the Duchesse". Here he does not take any part in the conversation.

(1) Or according to Emerson, Charles VI of France.

And yet, nevertheless, he is very necessary in the narrative. He introduces the setting by means of beautiful descriptions which we shall mention later. After he has described the temple of Venus and the court of the goddess of Nature, he remains a silent witness at the parliament, hearing, seeing, and recording the proceedings.

There are three divisions in the "Parlement of Foules"--the introduction; the park with its trees, personages, and temple; and the parliament of fowls.

Let us pause here to follow the course of the story. The poem opens with the poet's astonishment at the wonderful nature of Love. Often has he read of its miracles. One day while he sits reading old books, he happens on the dream of Scipio. Fast and long he reads of Africanus taking his grandson from the world and revealing to him the future dwellings of the righteous and of the wicked. Then he falls asleep and dreams that the same Africanus comes to him and says that he will requite him for his recent reading. Having invoked Cytherea to help him with his rhyme, Chaucer resumes the story of his dream. Africanus seizes him and leads him to a park on the gate of which are two inscriptions: one, the blissful realm of heart's cure; and the other, the realm of Danger and Disdain. As soon as they enter the gate, Africanus disappears. Many flowers, trees of all kinds, and birds fill the park. The whispering winds and singing birds make mellow the temperate air. Cupid stands under a tree beside a well, sharpening his arrows. Close by are Plesaunce, Aray, Lust, Curtesye, Craft, and others. The poet nears a temple of Venus which is supported by great pillars of jasper. Around it dance dishevelled women; on the roof are hundreds of doves; before the door sit Dame Pees and Dame Pacience;

within, stands the god Priapus being crowned with garlands of fresh flowers; and in a dim privy corner are Venus and her porter Richesse. Painted on the walls are many stories of noble women. Coming out again to the green park the poet sees a queen, the goddess of Nature, sitting upon her throne in a hall built of branches. Birds of all kinds are present, for it is St. Valentine's Day when the birds come to choose their mates. Nature bids them take their places according to their kind. And so they group themselves as birds of prey, worm-fowls, water-fowls, and seed-birds. Nature holds a female bird of great beauty on her hand, and tells all according to their rank to speak their choices. Three tercel eagles speak first and all choose the formel on Nature's hand. The formel blushes. With passion and respect the tercel eagles present themselves. Their speeches alone last from dawn until dusk. The protests of the other fowls become so loud that the ceremony is disturbed. Nature has to command that they each elect a representative. Then in the noisy debate about the manner in which a lover should pay his court, the falcon, the cuckoo, the goods, and the dove, severally show themselves chivalrous, selfish, coarse, and tender, each true to the class that he represents. Immediately following these noisy declarations, constantly interrupted by different parts of the assembly, Nature decides that the lady is to choose for herself. The formel begs Nature to grant her a year's respite. This request is granted. The other birds quickly choose their mates and fly off with them singing a rondel to a French tune: "He who loves well is slow to forget". This singing awakens the poet.

Referring to our summary we may observe the application of Chaucer's inspired passages. The conception of the court trial has

been traced to "Hueline et Eglantine". In this French poem two ladies dispute which has the more courteous lover. At last the court of fowls decide for them. The application by Chaucer we shall consider later.

The first evidence of the above mentioned inspiration is seen in the reflection on the wonders of love in the proem. For this we have no direct parallel cited by critics. Chaucer has devised it to begin the theme of his poem devoted to the wonders of love. The idea of love is sustained throughout by hints which we shall note in the course of the story as Chaucer has arranged them.

Here Chaucer introduces his guide. He has been reading Cicero's "Somnium Scipionis" and falls asleep. In his dream comes Africanus of the "Somnium" to reward him for his readings. The description of Africanus' appearance is a translation from Claudian. Before Chaucer journeys with him he invokes Cytherea to aid him in his rhyme. Some of the vision poems we have noticed have invocations but these are not essential parts of them. What is interesting in this one is the fact that Chaucer acknowledges Venus to be the one who made his dream. We have then a well chosen assistant for the telling of a love story.

Having arrived at the park gate under the guidance of Africanus Chaucer beholds inscriptions on the gate. These were suggested by Dante's "Inferno" though they are not in Chaucer so awe inspiring as in his original. Africanus, in the story Chaucer read before dreaming this dream, took his grandson of the world and revealed to him the future dwellings of the righteous and of the wicked. Now in the "Parlement of Foules" he leads Chaucer to a gate bearing the inscriptions, the blissful realm of heart's cure, and the realm of Danger and Disdain.

In the second division of the poem Chaucer has been influenced by Boccaccio's "Teseide". He has used a few passages from that poem in the following description. The temple is raised on lofty columns around which dance young men and maidens and above which fly the doves. Monna Pace with Pazienza at her side sits before the door. Within, the altar flames are fanned by sighs caused by Gelosia. To Priapus the highest place is assigned. Lying about in the sanctuary are many relics showing the power of love, such as broken bows of Diana's band and Atalanta's apples. The walls have painted stories of Pyramus, Thisbe, and many other lovers. In a more secret part of the temple Venus resides. Inside her apartment, guarded by Ricchezza, a dim light is cast on the reclining goddess. Bacchus and Ceres are seated on either side. This picture emphasizes the theme of love and Chaucer needed a similar scene before he was ready to discuss the love debate in the parliament.

Passing to the last division, the parliament, we find Chaucer's fancy was enkindled by "Planctus Naturae" of Alanus de Insulis and Jean de Condé's "La Messe des Oisians et li Plais des Chanonesses et des Grises Nonains". The latter which has already been here summarized we shall compare with the "Parlement of Foules". In the French poem Venus sits on her gorgeous throne surrounded by her birds. She hears the complaints of the canonesses against the grey nuns. Finally she makes the decision. In the English poem Nature sits on the throne. Though Chaucer has already described Venus in the temple in the park, it seems that he uses Nature not to avoid repetition but to carry out his own idea of dispensation. The formel is granted the right to choose for herself. Human nature then is to be her final judge.

Chaucer prepares the reader for this by having Nature preside as the judge in the parliament. This little stroke of realism is a result of Chaucer's artlessness.

In the closing of the parliament Chaucer has the lower class of birds scoff at the bird aristocracy. Thus he uses the former to expose the affectation in the refinement of courtly love. By this blending of sentimental poetry and comedy on the part of the lower fowls Chaucer has given to his "Parlement of Foules" a dramatic briskness and an air of gaiety mingled with romance.

The conclusion is like a dream. The singing of birds as they fly away awaken the dreamer. He then takes up other books and begins to read hoping some day to find something better.

The "Hous of Fame" in constructive art surpasses the "Book of the Duchesse" and the "Parlement of Foules". Chaucer has drawn from more sources, but, nevertheless, displays more originality in weaving them into a fascinating tale. The general notion of the House of Fame is indebted to Ovid's "Metamorphoses". Chaucer, moreover, has been influenced by recollections of philosophy, science, and art gathered by his French, Italian, and Latin study. The stories thus gleaned are woven by his powerful imagination into a connected and consistent plot.

This poem like the other two above mentioned belongs to the genre of the Old French vision poems. The "Book of the Duchesse" had its conventions applied to a personal elegy; the "Parlement of Foules" had its material spun into a personal compliment; and the "Hous of Fame" we shall now proceed to see has its conventional personages and situations "paraded forth to display a humorous survey of the whole world of mortal endeavors." The mood "runs rippling on in high spirited

fun." The dreamer, a melancholy and sleepless lover in the "Book of the Duchesse", is here differently employed. The dreamer assumes an attitude of wonder during his swift journey which is of intense ironical significance. In Chaucer's first vision-poem his dreamer was in effect a fictitious character; in this one he is addressed by the golden eagle as "Geoffrey".

There are three books in this "ambitious" design. The first is the introduction; the second, the marvelous journey; and the third, an account of the House of Fame ruled by caprices.

An epitome of these will make our divisions more perceptible.

Book I.

The poet prays God to turn dreams to good. He, himself, knows not why this is a dream or why that is. He cannot think what is the significance of dreams. He wonders if they are caused by sickness, prison, or great distress. Once more he repeats his prayer that the Holy Rood may turn every dream to good. Never had anyone so great a dream as had he on the tenth of December. Then he invokes the god of Sleep and attaches to his prayer a curse upon those who criticise his writings. With this his dream begins. The poet finds himself in a temple made all of glass. It is, he knows, the temple of Venus. On the walls is the story of Aeneas, more particularly of his love affairs which Chaucer relates as he sees them. Leaving the temple he views but a vast desert of sand and high up in the sky an eagle swooping downward.

Book II

Thinking again of his wonderful dream the poet declares there never was such a dream. Now he invokes Venus before he continues telling

it. The eagle swoops still lower and snatches him up and carries him so rapidly that he loses consciousness. Speaking in a man's voice the eagle says that he is a messenger of Jupiter sent to reward the poet for his service to blind Cupid and fair Venus by bearing him to the House of Fame where he shall hear tidings of Love's folk. The palace is situated mid-way between heaven and earth and sea so that every sound that leaves the earth passes to it. So palatable is this reasoning to the unlearned man that the eagle says that he might shake it by the bill. Up they soar. The fields, hills, mountains, and forests beneath dwindle to a point. Soon they are above the galaxy and the clouds. Once more the eagle, eager to give another lecture, asks the poet if he wishes to learn of the stars; but the poet replies that he is too old for such learning. Hearing a loud noise the eagle explains that they are now at the House of Fame from which the sound is coming. Then he sets the poet down in a street and bids him walk forth to the House of Fame. The poet regaining his courage asks further concerning the nature of the sounds that he hears. Thereupon the eagle answers that the sounds take the shape of the persons who utter them and thus the house is peopled. With this he bids his charge farewell and promises to wait for him.

Book III.

Here the poet calls upon Apollo to assist him to finish telling the dream. When he leaves the eagle, he advances to the house which is very strange to him. Upon a hill of ice it stands. Inside are minstrels, musicians, trumpeters, magicians, and others who have to do with news. The walls, the floor, the roof of the hall are all of gold. On a dais sits the Queen, not tall, now short. Straight down

to the door from the dais are pillars on which are great nobles and folk of dignity. The poet watches the various companies of suppliants approach to ask her for boons, which she grants as she lists. A by-stander at Chaucer's back now asks what is his name and why has he come thither. "It is," says Chaucer, "to learn tidings of Love's folk". The stranger kindly leads him out of the palace and shows him a wicker house quaintly wrought, whirling around. The windows are open and from them are coming the tidings true and false. Perched high on a rock is his eagle. To him the poet goes and prays him to remain while he sees the wonders in this house down in the valley. The eagle assures him that it is his intention to wait and since Jupiter has sent him to assist the poet he will help him enter the revolving house. Immediately he picks up the poet and flies through one of the open windows. The turning about of the bird-like cage ceases and Chaucer has a chance to look about. He hears a great noise in a corner where men are talking of love-tidings. Thus abruptly the poem ends.

With this summary before us we shall follow the three books through, noting the borrowed suggestions that Chaucer found necessary to develop his fanciful poem.

In book I the introduction includes the reflection on dreams which acts as a stimulus to the reader's curiosity; the invocation; and the description of the temple of Venus. The invocation is a pure convention in substance. Chaucer had found the idea in the "Anti-claudianus" which he had just read. Morpheus was frequently summoned as we have already noticed in Froissart's "Paradys d'Amour". Chaucer's invocation to the god of Sleep helps to intensify the reflection on dreams. The third part, the description of the temple of

Venus includes the story of the "Aeneid". But Chaucer has confined his selection to the love affairs. Aeolus is trumpeting the news. Later in the House of Fame he has the god of Winds trumpeting the fame of each suppliant.

In the second book is the swift marvelous journey. The eagle mentioned at the close of the first book now becomes the guide. As Virgil and Beatrice conduct Dante through the world of spirit so the philosophical eagle bears Chaucer aloft to the House of Fame giving him a scientific discourse on the nature of sound. This scientific lecture prepares the reader for the phantasmagoria in the House of Fame. The conversation is carried on almost by the eagle alone. His humor keeps his lectures palatable, for example,

"Lewedly to a lewed man
Speke, and shewe him swiche skiles,
That he may shake hem by the biles".

Just at the point of digression in the eagle's discourse, Chaucer remarks that he is too old to learn of astronomy.

Passing to the third book we find Ovid's House of Fame somewhat changed. Chaucer devises nine companies to appear before the goddess of Fame to present a survey of the whole world of mortal endeavors. The first company is awarded oblivion. The second is given world wide slander instead of honor. The third is granted what it seeks--the good renown that it deserves. The fourth and the fifth request that their merits may be forgotten; again Fame consents to the petition of the former, but objects to that of the latter. To the sixth class, the do-nothings, who have idled all their life and yet are eager for reputation, Fame gives their boon. Another sluggard

company requests the same but is given derision and reproach. The eighth company, the villains, seek good renown and are disappointed. The last and ninth company, also villains, exulting in their crimes, ask an evil reputation and receive it. This allegory Chaucer tells in a lively narrative. The picture of Aeolus to announce Fame's decision is so refreshing in its figurative language and its delicate humor that the repeated appearance of the trumpeter does not become monotonous. Artistically however, the third book is disproportionately long.

Ovid has influenced Chaucer more in the description of the House of Rumor than in that of the House of Fame. Ovid's house is the residence of Fame but it is of a maze-like structure and full of incessant murmurings, echoes and reports; no convocation of famous men is there. Chaucer, on the other hand, has combined realism and romanticism in his House of Rumor. He has read many romances both French and English and has discovered the whirling castle which the errant knight can enter only by the help of a guiding animal, that moves more swiftly than the castle itself. The love vision poems do not have a whirling house. Furthermore, Chaucer knew that the ancient houses of the Celts were made of wicker. Out of his general knowledge he fashions a wicker house with a vertiginous motion. Chaucer has not confused the sense of the Latin "fama" which means "reputation" or "renown". Its substance, however, is nothing but rumors. Now the connection between the House or Rumor and the House of Fame is very evident. From the House of Rumor the rumors come to the House of Fame where Aeolus trumpets abroad the reputations. This furnishes Chaucer an excellent situation for the humorous story of the ruling passion

of mankind.

When the poet hears a great noise in a corner where men are talking of love tidings, he abruptly ends his story and leaves his reader wondering over the conclusion. Nothing is left for him to tell but contemporary love stories of what he sees and hears. Like a dreamer he breaks off in the midst of a thot. The reader is thus given a chance to guess at what the conclusion would be and no doubt feels that Chaucer has so artfully presented a picture of the poet's desire to flee from the press and dwell in the realm of fantasy, that he needs not develop the theme, a discussion of love, to make the poet's story a dramatic whole.

Chaucer continues to have a great respect for his predecessors and borrows from them freely in his Prologue to the "Legend of Good Women". And once more his power in assimilating this material attracts our attention. In the other three dream poems, above mentioned, we have pointed out that the poems were filled not with colorless and shadowless allegorical personages, and conventional situations detached from the theme; but with an abundance of life, movement, and reality bearing on the theme itself.

As in the other poems the Prologue uses the vision machinery. It contains the vision, the court of Love, the May morning, the singing birds, and the springing flowers. The conventional lover frequently employs the poetry of the French "marguerite cult" in praising his lady. This poem stays closer to the types of convention than the "Hous of Fame" and yet, nevertheless, the style is fresh and the story is more unified. Chaucer again appears as a dramatic personage. We recall that he was an observer in the "Parlement of Foules" and a

dramatic personage in the "Hous of Fame". The former we found was written to celebrate the royal marriage of Richard II to the Princess Anne of Bohemia; and the "Book of the Duchesse" to eulogize Blanche the wife of John of Gaunt. Does the Prologue celebrate Queen Anne? Since the application of the marguerite is still a point for argument and is, moreover, not a matter of prime importance in our present study, we need not delay to consider the supposition.

In our discussion of the application of Chaucer's borrowings from the Italian, Latin, and French poets it will be necessary to pause for a moment to define the "marguerite cult" which colored his praise of the daisy. The praise of the "marguerite" had already been sung by Machaut, Froissart, and Deschamps, and so it seems that Chaucer used the convention in his affectionate treatment of the daisy in the Prologue.

According to Professor Lowes the three French poets contributed the following features to the "cult": One is led to suppose that Machaut's "Dit de la Marguerite" was composed for Pierre de Lusignan and celebrates one of his mistresses. The lady whom the daisy symbolizes is named the French Marguerite and is considered the choicest one. Though Froissart has Machaut's marguerite in his mind, yet he fashions another lady. She is the lady of the "Paradys d'Amours" who makes for him the chaplet of marguerites and is honored in his "balade". Later in another poem, "La Prison Amoureuse", Froissart writing to an imprisoned friend whom he calls Rose, after rejecting the flowers subordinated to the daisy in the "balade" of the "Paradys", mentions one small flower which is called the marguerite encircled in gold. Again he defends the marguerite against the pretensions of other flowers

in two later poems, "Pastourelle" and "Plaidoirie de la Rose et de la Violette". Thus building on Machaut Froissart has made an addition to the cultus. The third French poet, Deschamps, in his "Lay de Franchise" carries the symbolism of "Dit de la Marguerite" one step further. More will be said of this one later. And so in these poems we notice that the marguerite not only symbolizes a royal person but is the choicest of the flowers.

Before we take up a detailed observation of the B version of the Prologue we may find it interesting to examine the general differences between the two versions. In the B version there is a more immediate indebtedness to the French "marguerite cult". It, moreover, contains a greater praise of the daisy. To the daisy, Queen Alcestis, Chaucer is directed to dedicate the book. The moment of suspense that follows this and ends in a surprised recognition of the Queen makes the B version more dramatic than the A version which does not include the dedication of the book. Now for the structure itself, version A is better than version B. Version A begins with morning, provides for the long day, passes to evening, implies the duration of the night and brings the reader to the morning once more. After completing the circle of the day it comes to its climax in the account of the virtues of the flower. The sequence is good and the story moves steadily forward. There is a beginning,amiddle, and an end. Version B, on the other hand, begins with morning, passes to the virtues of the flowers and the poet's own love for the daisy, comes to evening, and without transition goes back to daylight. The lengthy description of the mating of birds which repeats the sentiment already expressed in 11.130-151 does not have anything to do with the main action of the story but rather

prolongs the May day setting to a disproportionate length. Professor Lowes says that in the A version the bird passage (1.139-43) is a dramatic touch, and links the May setting with the main action of the poem. Yet even with these faults of the B version it is more refreshing, spontaneous, and artistic than the A version.

Let us here follow the course of the B version so that we can note more clearly the application of the reminiscences from Boccaccio, the French vision poems, and the French "marguerite cult".

The delightful Prologue opens with the poet's reflection on his studious and literary disposition. When the May day comes, though, he lays aside his books for the fields and especially for the daisy. Early in the morning he rises and stays awake until the daisy closes for her rest. He laments that he cannot praise her and so calls on lovers who can sing her praise to help him. While the birds are warbling lays of love and welcoming summer, and the sweet fragrance of the flowers drifts to him, he sinks softly down on his elbows to abide the whole day gazing upon the daisy. He does not desire to praise the flower above the leaf. When darkness comes and the daisy closes her petals, it is the hour that he goes to the arbor where his bed is strewn with flowers. He falls asleep and dreams that he is in the same meadow where his flower was blooming, and from afar, walking in the meadow, is the god of Love leading a Queen. She, wearing a gold "fret" set with many white flowers, is dressed in green and looks exactly like a daisy. The god of Love wearing a crown of gold is clad with a silk garment embroidered with green leaves. In his hand are two fiery darts. He begins to spread his wings as he advances. So womanly, so benignantly, and so meekly the Queen comes toward the poet that she causes the

poet to break into a ballad bidding all the beautiful and virtuous ladies of history bow before her. Behind the god of Love the poet sees nineteen ladies in royal habit, and following these, an enormous number of women. First they worship the daisy and then sit round in a circle according to their station. The poet kneels with the flowers. When the god of Love sees him kneeling among his flowers, he asks him who he is. Upon being informed the god of Love rebukes him for writing the translation of the "Roman de la Rose" and the story of "Criseyde" which are against Love's laws. The Queen speaks in Chaucer's behalf and tells that the poet has written the "Hous of Fame", the "Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse", the "Parlement of Foules" besides other books. She begs the god of Love to have mercy and promises that the offender will serve him by singing praises of women who were true all their lives. Finally the god of Love shows mercy and asks the poet if he knows the lady. "Nay, sir", answers Chaucer. The god then speaks of the book lying in Chaucer's chest, that is of Queen Alcestis who was turned into a daisy. "Now knowe I hir", the poet replies. Once more the god rebukes him, this time for leaving Alcestis out of the ballad "Hyd Absolon, thy tresses", and commands him to include her in the next book with all the other true ladies. After giving further directions he says that he must go home to Paradise. Whereupon Chaucer takes his book and sets to work on his first legend.

This Prologue with its sustained tone of joy, its beauty of imagery, and its buoyant freshness of an English Maytide is one of Chaucer's most successful and most beautiful productions in conception and in execution.

The personal note of the poet is unusual in the fourteenth cen-

tury but here Chaucer, notwithstanding, expresses his taste, his attitude and his relations with the court. His thoughts are so spontaneous that they seem not to be grouped according to the structure of Chaucer's predecessors.

Nevertheless, let us now trace the possible indebtedness for the three parts of the poem: the praise of a May day; the description of the god of Love and the noble Queen; and the poet's interview with these divinities.

In the first division the poet lays aside his delightful books and seeks the gentle sweeping meadow on a May morning to enjoy the daisy while the birds sing in the numerous trees. Both the "marguerite" poems and the vision poems have similar introductions. The dream setting is not used by Deschamps in the "Lay de Franchise" and the worship is focused upon the marguerite. In the "Roman de la Rose" the dream setting is delayed until the poet gives a short discussion on dreams; an account of the nature of the book itself; and a praise of the month of May. Deschamps in his "Lay Amoureux" has delayed his dream setting longer than Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. He opens his poem with a praise of spring and the month of May. The beauties of the season delight him. He falls asleep and dreams that he is walking through the forest, then into a meadow where the god of Love is surrounded by a company. And still another example of this delayed dream setting and a dream transporting the poet to his May day delights is found in Guillaume de Machant's "Dit du Vergier". The poet rises, one April morning, and goes into a garden. He is delighted by the song of the birds and by the fragrance of white, yellow, and pink flowers. In this happy spot he thinks of his lady. The dream follows in which the poet dreams that he is in the same meadow where he had just

been walking.

Thus we see that Chaucer adapted to his story a conventional device for getting his dream under way. He needed for his noble lady an atmosphere of peace, daintiness, and beauty. Finding in these several suggestions such a setting, he cleverly applied it.

Near the close of this division of his poem, Chaucer's allusion to the "Leef" and "Flour" emphasizes his panegyric of the daisy. He does not wish his praise to the daisy to be misconstrued. His flower that he is praising is not the "Flour" of the English court society. That "Flour" is of a different note. He holds dear both the "Leef" and the "Flour".

Passing from the day wandering in the meadow to the dream portion of this poem, we find that the two are closely joined. In the vision Chaucer thinks that he is in the same meadow and sees a Queen who represents his daisy. The experience of the previous day, therefore, comes to him as he sleeps in his little arbor. In describing the daisy's perfect sweetness in the awakened world Chaucer has been influenced by Machant. He there speaks of the odor of the flower which is contrary to fact. Now in the dream world he turns to Froissart to enable him to define the crown of Alcestis. Froissart speaks of the white leaves of the daisy and not of an individual daisy.

But as to the primary conception or the fundamental elements of its structure Chaucer is indebted to no definite model. He had at his command all the traditions of the love vision "genre" and the "marguerite cult" but his plan for his Prologue originated in his own mind. He paints a wide and crowded scene without any confusion or distraction of attention from its central figure, Queen Alcestis.

Chaucer's story moves swiftly and smoothly forward. The Queen with the god of Love and her worshipful attendants approaches the lover. The lover is found in Love's domain and is charged with trespassing. He meets soon with a second charge which is heresy against Love's law based on what the offender has said or sung. Then the Queen distinctly recognizes that her master owes mercy to the suppliant. She pleads for him, and finally gives him a penance. The poet is ignorant, until the god of Love tells him, that this lady is after all some one of whom he has already known. Upon his recognition he praises her affectionately. In this brief summary we have the Queen at all times the central figure. The poet is inspired to break into a ballad upon seeing her. Her attendants worship her. The god of Love consents to her plea. And at the close the poet eulogizes her.

As a court poet Chaucer never forgot his audience. Knowing that the vision poems and the French "marguerite cult" were popular in his age he adapted them to his own original stories. Thus in his "Book of the Duchesse", the "Parlement of Foules," and the "Hous of Fame" he used many of the conventions of the vision poems. In the Prologue he used the two popular types. So doing he satisfied not only his own artistic taste but the public's as well. With it all he was more subjective, more personal, and more individual in the use of his material than his predecessors. His feeling for the real, touched by a fine sense of humor, shines forth in these stories. In the last poem, the Prologue, Chaucer wishes to tell of actual women and his personal feelings are increasingly asserting themselves. He is now prepared to display a wider outlook on life and in his masterpiece, his "Canterbury Tales", he himself becomes one of the pilgrims.

Chapter II.

"Troilus and Criseyde"

In "Troilus and Criseyde" Chaucer has developed a long narrative which W. M. Rossetti asserts is the most beautiful one in the English language. And Professor Kittredge declares that it is not only the first novel, in the modern sense, that was ever written but one of the best. Some readers, however, are disappointed when they read it for they do not find in it rapid movement. They declare the dialogues too long; the soliloquies languid; and the analysis of sentiment, emotion, and passion unattractive. This retarded action is due to the fact that the poem puts little stress on incidents but much stress on psychological analysis and dramatic revelation of character. Those who do enjoy the tale acknowledge that it is not one for a spare hour. To them only by careful reading is Chaucer's psychological treatment made clear and charming.

The story of Troilus and Criseyde is a mediaeval product. Homer merely mentions Troilus, a son of Priam ("Iliad" XXXIV 257). Virgil devotes but four verses to his death ("Aeneid" I 474-78). Dictys who took arms against Troy furnished journals of the war in his "Epherneris Belli Trojani". In the sixth century Dares, a Trojan, employs this history in his "De Excidio Trojal Historia" and gives an authentic account of the war from the standpoint of the defeated Trojans. His Troilus is depicted as a great leader, who on several occasions puts the Greeks to flight; wounds Diomede, Agamemnon, and even Achilles; and when taken at great disadvantage is slain. Briseida is accorded some prominence. In the twelfth century Benoit de Sainte More takes a brief epitome of Dares for the basis of his "Roman de Troi~~l~~ye" and supplements it with matter from Dictys and Ovid. His history begins with the Argonautic expedition, and describes

the rape of Helen, the gathering of the Greek hosts, the siege and fall of Troy, and the return of the Greek warriors, and the death of Ulysses. Benoît invents the story of the faithful love of Troilus and the faithlessness of Criseyde. His heroine is probably a combination of Homer's Briseis, slave of Achilles ("Iliad" I 1840), and Chryseis, daughter of Chryses ("Iliad" I 182). Pandarus is merely mentioned as one of the Trojan parliament. In the next century a Latin paraphrase of Benoît's poem with an extended denunciation of women was written by Guido delle Colonne in his "Historia Trojana". It is in this poem that Chaucer finds the martial deeds of Troilus recounted in full. But before this production of Guido, Joseph of Exeter, in the ninth decade of the twelfth century elaborated the work of Dares in "De Bello Trojano". Professor Root finds inevitable traces of this account in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde."

In the fourteenth century we find a source of prime importance, Boccaccio's "Filostrato" derived from Benoît and Guido. Troilus is the principal personage, sentimental and passionate. Griseida, a young widow of considerable experience, corrupt in character, is very coquettish.

Pandarus is presented as a young and sprightly Florentine gentleman, an intimate companion of Troilus and a cousin to Griseida. He is the gay go-between of whose behavior the narrator cordially approves.

It has been accepted that the "Filostrato" is the account chiefly followed in Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde". Chaucer introduces many new elements, though, and shifts the interest from Troilus to Criseyde. He, moreover, employs many classical allusions, invocations, and much astrology. Throughout the poem are philosophical ideas of Boethius in regard to love, to mutability in fortune, and to predestination, be-

sides frequent proverbs and admonitions such as abound in the "Roman de la Rose". For the historical background it seems that Chaucer drew from the works of Joseph of Exeter, Guido delle Colonne, and Benoît. Professor Kittredge contends that Chaucer seems to have believed that a Lollius wrote on the Trojan war for he refers to Lollius as his authority.

With these borrowed passages and original ones Chaucer develops a pure comedy, not unmixed with irony. He, enjoying human life in all its changes, sympathizes[1] with his personages. Troilus is mighty in arms but has little experience of men or of conduct. He takes a beautiful but "complex" woman for an angel of heaven. Lacking strong volition he cannot master his fate. Pandarus, a middle-aged busybody, unsuccessful in his own loves, undertakes to manage the love of Troilus and Criseyde. Criseyde, whose softness of affection is the secret of her enduring charm, is the principal character. The complexity of her double nature holds our interest. The woes of Troilus Chaucer elaborates; but he shows reluctance at narrating the faithlessness of Criseyde.

An abstract of such a poem, though inadequate to represent its real nature, will be useful for our discussion of its unity, coherence, and proportion.

(Book I) At the very beginning Chaucer announces his theme. He is to tell the double sorrow of Troilus in loving Criseyde, who is at last unfaithful. Calchas, the great diviner, foreknowing the destruction of Troy, flees to the Greeks, and leaves in Troy his beautiful daughter, Criseyde, a young widow. During the Trojan celebration of Palladion's feast, the King's son, Troilus, a professed woman-hater, sees

(1) Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry Ch. IV.

Criseyde. At once he is smitten with love. He retires to his own chamber in shame and love-sickness. There his friend Pandarus, an uncle of Criseyde, finds him and plans to be a go-between in Troilus' love scenes.

(Book II) On a fair May morning Pandarus visits Criseyde to tell her of Troilus' love and distress and to plead that she show a little pity. As she is sitting by her window, after her uncle leaves, she hears men crying in the street that Troilus has put the Greeks to flight. She looks out and beholds her new lover, armed all but his head, riding a wounded steed. Through her mind passes thoughts of his prowess, his estate, his renown, his wit, his poise, and his gentleness. After this she goes to play with her nieces in her garden where a passionate ballad sung by Antigone, her niece, sets her dreaming of love. Later at night, when she is in bed thinking of Troilus, she has love brought to her in the trills of the nightingale, warbling in the moonlight on a green cedar below her window. She falls asleep and dreams that an eagle digs its long claws into her breast and without causing her any pain, removes her heart and places his in its place. Troilus, urged by Pandarus, writes a letter to Criseyde which Pandarus bears the next morning to the lady. Persuaded more by her own temperament than by Pandarus' entreaties, Criseyde replies. Then Pandarus goes to Troilus' most beloved brother and has him invite Criseyde to dinner.

(Book III) After the dinner Criseyde is brought by her uncle to the bedside of Troilus who is pretending exhaustion from love. Criseyde kisses the youth and takes him into her service. Soon after this meeting Pandarus asks Criseyde and her attendants to supper declaring that Troilus is away. The rain and thunder make it impossible for the guests to leave and so Pandarus gives the attendants a corner room and Criseyde

a little room for the night. Later in the evening Pandarus enters her room through a trap-door and describes to her the unexpected arrival of her knight, and his pitiful condition and despair. He says that Troilus, now torn with jealousy, and thinking of a rival receiving her affection, will die if he is not comforted by her. Thereupon, the niece moved with pity consents to receive her lover.(1) When Troilus sees that his feigned jealousy brings tears to his lady's eyes, he is so overcome that he falls into a swoon. Pandarus has to restore him. To urge him on he gives him further advice. When his plot appears successful, he withdraws to the fireside with his books of romances. But even after his departure something of his ribaldry remains with this scene. His humor, "grinning and capering", modifies the lovers' sentiment.

(Book IV) When Calchas askes that Antenor be given in exchange for Criseyde, Troilus is present in the parliament but says not a word lest men espy his love. The Trojans accept the offer. Pandarus arranges another interview for Troilus and Criseyde before the latter goes to the Greek camp. Criseyde promises her lover that she will escape from the Greeks and return to Troy in ten days. Troilus urges elopement, but Criseyde, fearing disgrace, objects. The next morning Troilus leaves her chamber, and she goes from Troy.

(Book V) Criseyde is escorted to the Greeks by Diomede who pleads his love. He does not "lose his heart but merely improves a good opportunity" to win her love. By the tenth day he has succeeded in pressing his suit. Criseyde gives him a steed and a brooch that she had received from Troilus, and bids him wear her token. Greatly

(1) Professor Cummings opposes, and Professor Lowes defends the opinion that Chaucer borrowed this secret meeting of the lovers from Boccaccio's "Filocolo".

does she lament her falseness to Troilus. Pandarus once more comforting Troilus tells him to write his sorrow to his lady. Criseyde replies that she is going to return to him. In the meanwhile, Cassandra interprets a dream of Troilus as showing that Criseyde has given Diomede her love. Troilus refuses to believe the interpretation and continues to write to his lady. She replies feebly and finally breaks off the correspondence. Even, when the fatal truth is revealed to him by the brooch upon the coat, reft by Deiphebus from Diomede, he cannot upbraid her faithlessness. Diomede and Troilus meet often on the field yet neither slays the other. Finally Troilus wreaks vengeance on the Greeks, and before he falls by the sword of Achilles he sighs,

"... Criseyde, swete may,
Whom I have ay with al my mighty served,
That ye thus doon, I have it nought deserved."

The poem consists of "fifty scenes bound into a dramatic unity." It is Criseyde that remains from the beginning to the close the center of the unbroken interest. Through the eyes of Troilus she is first presented to us. Then Pandarus becomes active in producing episodes for the development of the theme. She is not a mere victim of the machinations of her uncle. Her own temperament, not Pandarus' intrigues, persuades her to yield to the love of Troilus. After she knows the secret of Troilus' passion, it is the tenderness of the mediaeval lady of romance that dissipates her reserve. She is never more sentimental, sweeter, or more romantic than she is when she listens to the nightingale in the cedar tree. In her first actual interview with Troilus feigning illness in the house of Deiphebus, she is irresistibly drawn

to her knight. The fears and qualms that she experiences, the rainy night in Pandarus' home, are due to the "psychological trepidations of her heart" in the presence of intense erotic emotion. When the impending doom of Troy brings about the separation of the lovers it does not surprise us to see her in her deep grief, and her swoon. But for Troilus she refrains from showing her grief during their last visit together. After days of waiting, obdurate refusals of Calchas, and persistent approaches of Diomede, Criseyde relies too much on her three former strong qualities, "her skill in repartee, her simulation, and her enduring love for Troilus." Diomede tells her it is useless to grieve for a Trojan for they will be inevitably destroyed. She can see for herself that the folk of Troy are in prison. Criseyde is impressionable and weak. She, at last, succumbs to the stress of circumstance and, moreover, to her own lack of faith in the ultimate happy issue of events. Her soul "undergoes a change but not a deterioration." Thus the two factors, Pandarus' intrigues, and the doom of Troy, are used to reveal the loveliness and weakness of Criseyde. Her strength of will is no match for her inconstant heart. This delineation of the character of Criseyde binds all the scenes together. Twenty-three out of the fifty scenes appear with her as the chief character. The other twenty-seven are of her and in exhibition of her. Chaucer has pictured her in all of her emotional moods from the "first dawn of her passion for Troilus, on through her days of happiness, into her pitiful misery and her fall."

Each scene is in its proper sequence and is firmly knit with the past and future of the story. Each scene is in its own place and with one exception, each has its own special fitness, and its own inevitable function. There is one passage (book IV 947-1085) on fore-

knowledge and freedom of the will which perhaps is inartistic, but is not a digression. The sequence of the scenes is arranged, of course, for the purpose of introducing and revealing characters. The persons that take part are fourteen, six women and eight men. Of these fourteen, four carry on the real movement of the action. And of the four principal characters, Criseyde is the first to be brought before the reader, then Troilus, then Pandarus, and, at last, in the thirty-ninth scene, Diomede. As Troilus' hopes sink; Diomede's hopes rise. These fifty scenes having astonishing variety of personal feelings are connected by link-passages of dramatic skill. Some, like the transitory joy (book III, 813-33) and the adversity following prosperity (book III, 1625-29), are reflections on the story. Others are narratives or descriptions, which are necessary for the understanding of the plot. In order to reveal character Chaucer has arranged the scenes according to the cause and effect of motives and emotions. The unveiling of his characters thus produces no shock to the reader. Following the scene of the opening action in the temple, Pandarus keeps first Criseyde and then Troilus advised. The impending doom of Troy separates them. Then comes the days of waiting full of sorrow for both the lovers. Until the separation there is little development of character in either the hero or the heroine. The former is all the devotion of a faithful servant in the Court of Love, and all the dignity of the conventional lover. The latter, the blithe lady of romance, becomes a branded woman. In due sequence these fifty scenes form all the five parts of the dramatic scheme which we may next consider.

Chaucer plans his plot with absolute symmetry of proportion. The first part of the poem leads up to the complete union of the lovers

and the second part describes the fast ensuing separation. The former contains 4543 lines and the latter 3514 lines. Chaucer has thus shifted his emphasis from that of Boccaccio. By the elaboration of the first part, the dramatic center of the story, which in the "Filostrato" comes before the middle of the poem, is thrown by Chaucer into the second half. Boccaccio, the sentimentalist, elaborates the pathetic scenes of the falling action; Chaucer, the humorist, centers his interest in the subtle interplay of motive, the complication of the plot, and above all the psychological problem of Criseyde's character. The part of the poem given to minute revelation of motive and temperament of the characters is extended through thirty-seven of the scenes. Chaucer has wisely used the forms of discourse best adapted to this purpose. He has employed the dialogue, the monologue, the group scenes, and the trio scenes. This order notes the most frequent use of the first, then the second and the third. The last is rarely used. The climax is given in a single scene. Only twelve scenes are devoted to the result of the climax which is the developing of the moral degradation of Criseyde under the influence of Diomede's passion. Chaucer, in order to give fuller space to his psychological details in the study of character, pushes his climax scene (book IV, 1128-1701) from the center of composition to a point much nearer the end. It is preceded by 5, 797 verses and followed by 1,869. The protasis of the drama contains 266 lines in which Troilus and Criseyde are introduced. There are 5,486 verses devoted to the epitasis, beginning with the scene in the temple where the action opens, and extending to the climax. In 619 lines there is the climax and the complete solution of the dramatic problem. Here there is the triumph of worldly prudence and of conventional scruples over the

ardor of passion and the glory of self-sacrifice. As a result of the climax, comes the seduction of Criseyde by Diomede and the death of Troilus; contained in the next 1,820 lines. The last fifty lines, the closing stage of the action, give the beautiful scene in which the soul of Troilus, taken from earth into paradise, looks down with scorn upon the baseness of earthly life.(1)

(1) For the plot structure I have been indebted to Professor Price, P.M.L.A., Vol. Iv., pp.307-322.

Chapter III

"The Plan of the 'Canterbury Tales'"

Chaucer's Eastern predecessors furnished him many models of stories in "framework". The most conspicuous examples are the "Fables of Bidpai", the "Seven Wise Masters" or "Seven Sages", and the "Disciplina Clericalis". In the first is told the story of a certain king of India who, having been liberal to a hermit, is rewarded by a treasure in which is a piece of silk bearing mystic characters. This inscription reveals that another treasure for him is hidden in the mountains of Ceylon. Thither he hastens and meets the sage Bidpai who narrates to him a series of tales which constitute the treasure and the book. In many of these stories are animals as personages. A more complex and more widely circulated mediaeval work is the second one, the "Seven Wise Masters". An initial narrative relating the danger of a king's son at a certain age unless he would maintain complete silence, furnishes the framework of the series of stories that are prolonged in their telling by the wise men until the hour of the son's destiny is passed. This "framework" has more plot than that of the "Fables". The third story, the "Disciplina Clericalis", is another series of didactic narratives given by a father to his son.

The "Arabian Nights", which reached England after Chaucer's day, differs from the "Fables" and the "Seven Wise Masters" in the fact that the collection is made for the purpose of amusement. It may have furnished a precedent for Boccaccio, who is not attempting a moral improvement of his readers in his "Decameron". In many respects Boccaccio surpasses his Eastern predecessors. His work has not something improbable or extravagant in the invention of the circumstances which give

occasion to his several stories. On the contrary there is a sense of reality over both the initial story and the following ones. Ten young people, seven women and three men, flee from Florence to escape the danger of a pestilence; and pass ten days in a beautiful garden. While the plague rages in the city, they amuse themselves at the country villa by telling stories. Each day a chosen leader announces the subject for the day and calls upon each member to tell a tale.

Thus far no uncontradicted evidence has been given to show that Chaucer is indebted to Boccaccio's "Decameron" for his "framework". The "Canterbury Tales" has many resemblances and yet the fundamental fiction is different. Boccaccio's ten narrators, all of high social standing, are assembled in a garden; Chaucer's motley company of pilgrims are riding on horseback to Canterbury. Both have the atmosphere of out-of-doors.

Another group of stories with which Chaucer was probably acquainted is Gower's "Confessio Amantis". This contains a prologue and eight books in which a priest admonishes a lover and narrates stories to emphasize his monitions.

Recently Professor Young has noted several similarities between Chaucer's plan of the "Canterbury Tales" and Sercambi's "Novelle". The "framework" of the latter is composed of a collection of stories recounted on a pilgrimage. A number of men and women from different walks of life decide to leave Lucca during the pestilence. They accordingly meet in the church of Santa Maria to receive communion. Upon the suggestion of a prominent citizen, Aluisi, that they choose one from the group to whom they can pay reverence and obedience, who will control their pleasures, plan the itinerary, and lead them on the long journey,

the group immediately elects Aluisi as the leader. They acquiesce in his request for money and at once raise a purse of three thousand florins for expenses and promise to give more if they have need of a larger amount. A treasurer and a steward are appointed by the leader; and the daily observances of the offices of the church and daily amusements of songs and discourses are planned by Aluisi. Sercambi is to be the official story teller. They visit nearly a hundred towns in going around the southern part of Italy and northward along the east coast, and back again to Lucca. In some cities they linger a night, in other cities, several nights. They travel on foot, the most of the way, but by water in the vicinity of Venice, and perhaps in wagons from Ferrara to Francolino. The story telling takes place on the road or in inn yards or gardens of the towns. The local color appears in the stories; for example, at Rome the stories are of the Roman history; around Venice, they are of Venetian subjects; and on the way to Verona, the tales are of Veronese life.

In comparing the "Novelle" and the "Canterbury Tales" Professor Young finds the following five similar features. The group of pilgrims in each, a happy miscellaneous company, foregather in a church or an inn. The second similarity is the leader. Each is appointed by the pilgrims and has many like activities. Harry Bailey, having offered his service to the Canterbury pilgrims, is accepted as their leader; Aluisi, having suggested that a leader be chosen, is elected for that office. In calling their speakers they frequently mention the towns that they pass, for example, Harry Bailey says,

"Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme,
Lo Depford.' and it is half-way prymme.

Lo Grenewich, ther many a shrewe is mine;"

and

"Lo! Rouchestre stant heer faste by!"

They both comment occasionally upon the tales, adding a human touch to the pilgrimage. The third point of similarity is the activities of the pilgrims on the journey. Chaucer's "links" give the clash of personality in vital and inevitable humor; Sercambi's "intermezzo" provides only a lifeless parallel. The fourth mark of resemblance is the application of the tales to the pilgrims. One of the many examples of this is the remark of the Host at the end of the Physician's Tale,

"This was a fals cherl and a fals justyse!
As shamful deeth as herte may devyse
Come to thise juges and hir advocats!"

The fifth point is the similarity of the narrators. In the "Novelle" the author tells all the stories, but many members of the group give other recitations when they are called upon by the leader. In Chaucer's work the pilgrims recount the stories. Thus the "framework" of the "Canterbury Tales" has resemblances in that of the "Novelle".

It seems that the English poet has set aside his "Legend of Good Women" which is less vivid and less varied than his above mentioned poem in order to write a greater story in "framework". He has chosen a pilgrimage as his scene. Having lived in London and Greenwich, he, no doubt, had seen many pilgrims setting out on a pilgrimage. His frequent trips to the continent had acquainted him with roads over which they wended their way. The night before they start on their visit to the shrine of Thomas a Becket, the thirty pilgrims including Chaucer meet at the Tabard Inn in Southwark. This varied class, meeting as

equals, is made up of a Knight, a Squire, a Yeoman, a Prioress, a Nun (the Prioress' 'chapleyne'), with her three priests, a Monk, a Friar, a Merchant, a Clerk of Oxford, a Man of Law, a Franklin, a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer, an Upholsterer, a Cook, a Shipman, a Doctor, a Wife of Bath, a Parson, a Plowman, a Miller, a Manciple, a Reeve, a Summoner, and a Pardoner. Upon the suggestion of the Host, Harry Bailey, they all agree to tell each two tales going and two coming in order to enliven the journey. This plan would make one hundred and twenty tales besides the tales by the additional member, the Canon's Yeoman. The informal remarks by the pilgrims, the host, and Chaucer would form the links. During their journey of three days and a half numerous comments on the stories, roads, and amusements of the night would naturally take place.

The original plan was evidently modified, for we have ten "fragments" containing in all twenty-four tales. Of these, twenty-one are complete, and the Tale of the Cook and of the Squire and "Sir Thopas" are incomplete. Out of the thirty pilgrims, who leave Southwark, only twenty-one tell stories, for Chaucer tells two and the Canon's Yeoman, who joins them at Boghton under Blee, tells one.

The spirit of travel and of holiday unifies the "Canterbury Tales". An April prelude in the Prologue breathes the springtime atmosphere which is sustained and felt not only in the merry descriptions of the types and the individual pilgrims but also in the tales they tell. The pilgrimage is provided with a Host who is an excellent one to preserve unity among the story tellers. He is large, handsome, jovial, and fears nobody. His tact and discretion help him in the most serious social difficulties. Being the keeper of an inn, he is well acquainted

with all classes of men. He holds himself neither above nor below their morals. Once in the course of the journey his own swearing brings upon him the reproof of the Parson. Nevertheless, he clearly discerns the inconsistency between the religious profession and the practice of the Monk. With his quick wit and tolerably wide sympathies he is an interested listener to the numerous stories different in subject and in key. When he sees that the stories are too tedious for his company, he interrupts, for example, he expresses his weariness at the end of Chaucer's "Sir Thopas". He does not hesitate to admonish the Clerk to tell a tale that will not make them go to sleep. At times he feels it is duty to reprove the drunken Miller and to avert a quarrel between the Friar and the Summoner. Again the Host rides about forcing his hearty and sometimes boisterous manner to irritate some pilgrim into revolt, for each has agreed that the one who revolts is to pay the entire expenses of the pilgrimage. The Host does not always control affairs. There are occasional comments by the pilgrims concerning the stories and quarrels. These give rise to new groups of tales not anticipated by the Host. Then the arrival of the Canon's Yeoman furnishes a motive for a story. Thus the Host, a "dynamic agent" and the life and spontaneous humor of the pilgrims link the stories into a definite unity.

The coherence and incoherence of the "Canterbury Tales" are brought about by varied devices. In the Prologue the arrangement of the description is determined by no fixed principle. Chaucer merely employe his material so as to best portray the personal appearance of the pilgrims including the striking and representative details of dress, equipment, and bearing; and the inner character of each.

After the reader has been introduced to the characters and has been informed concerning the plans of the pilgrimage, the scene comes to a close until morning. Then the company ride forth to the watering of St. Thomas and the Knight chosen by lot is to tell the first story. Thus the Prologue passes directly into the Knight's Tale. The "fragments" that follow are not connected into a coherent whole. The different manuscripts arrange them in different ways. It is thought that Chaucer had made more than one tentative arrangement or that he never decided upon any arrangement. Editors have settled the matter according to indications of time and place. The present preference is for A C $B^{(1)}$ $B^{(2)}$ D E F G H $I^{(1)}$. This would group in A: the Tales of the Knight, The Miller, the Reeve, and the Cook; in C: the tales of the Physician and the Pardoner; in $B^{(2)}$: the tales of the Shipman, the Prioress, Sir Thopas, Melibeus, the Monk, and the Nun's Priest; in D: the tales of the Wife of Bath, the Friar, and the Summoner; in E: the tales of the Clerk and the Merchant; in F: the tales of the Squire, and the Franklin; in G: the tales of the Second Nun and the Canon's Yeoman; in H: the tale of the Manciple; and in I: the tale of the Parson. Between the Knight's tale and the Parson's tale there are eight gaps. The links which do exist are of two kinds, headlink and endlink. The former prepares one for the following story, and the latter contains a comment on the story preceding. A single link sometimes fulfils both these functions. The links are responsible for these groups: the Knight and the Miller, the Miller and the Reeve, the Reeve and the Cook, the Shipman and the Prioress, the Prioress and Thopas, Thopas and Melibeus, Melibeus and the Monk, the Monk and the Nun's Priest, the

(1) Wells, "A Manual of the Writings of Middle English", p.679

the Physician and the Pardoner, the Wife of Bath and the Friar, the Friar and the Summoner, the Clerk and the Merchant, the Squire and the Franklin, and the Second Nun and the Canon's Yeoman. Each of the following have only a headlink: the Man of Law, the Squire, the Clerk, and the Manciple. These have no headlink: the Doctor, the Wife of Bath, and the Second Nun; these have no endlink: the Cook, the Pardoner, the Summoner, and the Franklin. Some of the manuscripts have an endlink for the Nun's Priest, and an epilogue for the Merchant and the Pardoner. The endlink of the Man of Law is usually known as the Shipman's Prologue. Setting aside the disputed question of order we may see that the separate stories are grouped according to motifs. The nature and the content of some sections of the tales are due to the interplay of the personalities, the views, and the conduct of the pilgrims reacting on one another. We cannot determine or need not determine whether the interplay of personalities brought about the motifs or the latter produced the former. Only one of the outstanding motifs we may consider now and omit the others until we take up the different stories.

Recently an interesting basis of union[1] for several of the tales has been observed by Professor Kittredge and Professor Lawrence. They both have taken for the nexus of their proposed group a debate as to which of two, the husband or the wife, should have the mastery. But Professor Lawrence traces the beginning of the "Marriage Group" much farther back in the "Canterbury Tales" than Professor Kittredge does. The former introduces a prelude to the debate which involves

(1) Cf. Hinckley: P.M.L.A. Vol.25 pp.292-305. The view is here opposed.

the "Melibeus", the "Monk's Tale", and the "Nun's Priest's Tale". The remarks of the "Melibeus" on the theme of conjugal sovereignty specify that the wife prevails upon the husband to give her control in domestic affairs. Immediately the Host is reminded of a personal example and he tells of his experience with his shrewish wife. This is followed by the Monk's tragedies of Virginia. Since the Monk neglects to take the "implied challenge" of the Host, the Nun's Priest accepts it in his tale when he narrates the tragedy of the husband due to the wife's counsel. At this point of the preliminary discussion of marriage sovereignty, Professor Kittredge's "Marriage Group" begins.(1) And so we may now continue with his possible theory.

The Wife of Bath in her Prologue and Tale takes a "fling" at the Clerk when she emphatically asserts that women should have sovereignty over their husbands. While the Friar and the Summoner engage in a comic quarrel, the Clerk is wrapped in serious thought. The rehearsing of the Wife of Bath's tribulations in marriage which were not assuaged in the least by her fifth husband a clerk, have insulted the clerk. And the longer he waits to defend his class, the more incensed he becomes. The quarrel ended, the Clerk tactfully rebukes the Wife's conduct and her views with the story of Griselda's humble and submissive life in her home. All the irony that he can apply, he weaves into his plea that wives should rule their husbands and make them miserable. The ball begins to roll. Before it stops, the Merchant takes a hand. With stinging irony he utters views which are antithetical to those of the Wife of Bath. Having been called on to say something of love the Squire begins his tale of pure romance but does not finish it. Just

(1) Kittredge: Chaucer and His Poetry pp. 185 ff.

what would have been the outcome we are left to imagine. The next one, though, who again definitely takes up the debate is the Franklin. In his tale it is obvious to the pilgrims that he has thought out some clear refutations. That "women do not desire to be constrained as thralls" alludes to the Prologue and the Tale of the Wife of Bath; that "love is a thing of free spirit and that women naturally love liberty" refer to the Clerk's theory; that "he who is patient in love has the greatest advantage" recalls the story of Griselda; and that "there are joys, ease, and prosperity between husband and wife" suggests the Merchant's praise of marriage. Finally the Franklin concludes not only his discussion of the subject but the whole debate with this view: there should be mutual forbearance and perfect gentle love between husband and wife. Thus ends one of the acts in Chaucer's "Human Comedy".(1)

The length and proportion of the separate stories are determined by people of varied taste and yet at times the crowd is allowed to decide upon the end of the tales. We have already noted interruptions when the pilgrims have become impatient with the narrations. This realistic method of adjusting the proportion is an interesting device to be considered later in our discussion. Let us turn to the Prologue at the present.

In this Chaucer draws a vivid realistic picture of his numerous characters without becoming monotonous. The minor characters such as the Nun and the three priests are briefly mentioned in a line or two, while the Knight, the Monk, the Friar, and the Host are more fully described. With the description of the Pardoner Chaucer takes leave of his pilgrims and returns to his Tabard Inn. Briefly and yet artfully

(1) Kittredge: Chaucer and His Poetry. pp.209-210.

the poet relates the Host's proposition for the journey. After the guests assent to this plan, they sleep in preparation for a long pilgrimage. The next morning as soon as the Knight is designated by lot to tell the first story, the Prologue ends, being artistic in its proportion throughout. The introduction of forty lines includes the season, the place, and the occasion for the assembling at the Tabard Inn. Then follow the dramatic characters as they appear on the road to Canterbury recounted in the next seven hundred and twenty lines (40-760). The definite plans for the ride and the night's rest extends from line 761 to line 821. And from line 822 to the closing line 900, the poem relates the happenings of the following morning, the early departure of the pilgrims, and the choosing of the lot.

Chaucer was thoroughly acquainted with various types of mediaeval literature, and, moreover, showed artistic skill in constructing them for his individual pilgrims going to Canterbury. The company tell both humorous and serious narratives. We may not here analyze the plots of all the tales; but we shall treat representatives of the romance of chivalry, the lay, the exemplum, the fable, the fabliau and the miracles of the Virgin. In these we may note that Chaucer in handling his plots is far above a crowd of minor poets who have dealt with similar themes. There is great reason to conclude this not only from what has already been mentioned concerning Chaucer's borrowed and original material in the vision poems and "Troilus and Criseyde" but from some evidences which we shall now produce.

The Knight's Tale

The "Knight's Tale" Chaucer borrowed mainly from Boccaccio's "Teseide" and slightly from Statius' "Thebaid". Just a very few of the descriptive passages are from the latter. Though the plot resembles the former, the presentation is in many respects different. Let us examine wherein Chaucer has made his changes. Mr. A. W. Ward has found that the English poet has condensed the Italian story about one fifth. The long romantic epic of 10,176 lines is reduced to a tale of 2,250 lines. Of these, 270 lines are directly translated from the Italian poem, 374 lines are a general imitation of "Teseide", and 132 more exhibit a slight likeness to it. Therefore about one third of the "Knight's Tale" is indebted to the original model.

Let us turn now to the English poem and in some detail unfold the plot which has undergone interesting modifications, omissions, and transitions.

When Theseus, a conqueror, returns to Athens with his queen, Hypolita, and his sister-in-law, Emily, he is met by ladies dressed in black who bewail their grievous fate. Creon, lord of the city of Thebes, will not allow them to burn or to bury the bodies of their slaughtered husbands. Theseus, having promised to avenge these ladies, leaves his queen and Emily to dwell in their new home while he goes to Thebes. After Creon has been slain, the pillagers ransack the heap of dead bodies, in order to strip them of their armour, and find at the very bottom, pierced through with many a bloody wound, two cousins, one named Arcite, the other Palamon. These two knights are carried to the tent of Theseus and are sent by him to Athens to dwell in prison for the rest of their days. Theseus then rides home. In a tower with daily woe the prison-

ers pass their hours. One May morning Emily, fairer than the lily, is wandering in the garden adjoining the tower. Palamon, who is pacing to and fro in his room, pauses at his window. When he beholds Emily, he cries out so grievously that Arcite rushes quickly to his side to comfort his beloved friend. Arcite, too, casts his eyes on Emily. And with that look he is wounded as sorely as Palamon. Hearing Arcite say that he wishes to see her, Palamon turns fiercely to his friend to remind him of their vow that never until death would one hinder the other in love. Arcite replies that Palamon's affection is only of a goddess but his is of a living creature. Duke Perithous while visiting Theseus asks to have his friend, Arcite, released. After a definite understanding that he is never for a moment to be seen again in Theseus' country, Arcite speeds homeward, exiled for evermore out of the country in which his lady dwells. Daily he mourns his banishment from her. Palamon thinks his condition sadder for Arcite might make war upon Theseus and thereby win his lady, but there is no hope for him in prison. Arcite grows lean, sallow, and sadder. No man would recognize him. After a year or two of pain and woe, Mercury appears to him in a dream and says,

"T' Atheness shaltou wende;
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."

Arcite, convinced by his mirror that he would not be known in Athens, disguises himself as a poor labourer and returns to the forbidden city. After serving as a page in Theseus' home he is made a squire. In the seventh year of his imprisonment and on the third night of May, Palamon with his friend's help escapes from prison while the jailer sleeps. To a grove he flees to await the dark of the next night when he can go

to Arcite to beg him to make war upon Theseus. The lark is saluting the gray morning as Arcite enters the grove singing of May, of woe, and of Emily. From the bush which has concealed him Palamon, shaking with ire, rushes forth to ask Arcite to choose either death or the abandonment of Emily. Immediately Arcite draws his sword. He vows that he would never allow Palamon to go from the woods if he were not sick and mad for love and weaponless. Then he adds that he will bring Palamon meat and drink and bedding this day and a knightly armour the next morning for their duel. At the appointed hour they begin the thrusting of their swords. For a wondrous time they fight with blood up to their ankles. On this May morning Theseus with his queen and Emily go hunting in the grove. Soon Theseus comes upon the knights. "Ho", he says as he rides between them. At once Palamon relates why both combatants should meet immediate death. Then the women begin to weep. Thereupon Theseus forgives the knights on condition that they, fifty weeks from this day, bring a hundred knights armed fully for the lists to contest Emily. Theseus is to be the impartial judge. To the victor he will grant the lady. In the meanwhile he has built an amphitheatre with temples of Mars, of Diana, and of Venus richly painted within. On the appointed day, or the Sunday night before dawn, Palamon hears the lark sing as he goes to the temple of Venus in the lists. There before Venus he asks not for victory but for his lady's love. The statue of Venus shakes and makes a sign to signify that his prayer is accepted. Though it shows delay, he knows that his boon is to be granted. Later Emily goes to Diana and begs that if she must have one of the knights that she be given the one who desires her most. One of the fires on the altar is instantly quenched, then relighted; the other one

is quenched but with a whistling sound just as wet brands make when burning. At the ends of the brands run out bloody drops. Diana then tells her that to one of the knights she will be wedded. Arcite goes to the temple of Mars to offer his sacrifice. After reminding Mars that he, a god, once had sorrow in his heart when his love of Venus was discovered by Vulcan, Arcite begs Mars to have pity on his grief. He asks for victory and nothing more. A murmuring full low and dim says, "Victory". Saturn appears to Venus to tell her not to weep, that she shall keep her promise to Palamon. At the hour for the tournament, when the spectators are seated, Arcite with banners red rides into the lists from the west side through the gates of Mars; and at the same moment Palamon with banners white rides from the east side through the gate of Venus. Ere the sun goes to the west Palamon feels the sword of King Emetrius bite deep his flesh. Theseus cries, "Ho! Arcite of Thebes shall have Emily". The trumpeters herald the victory of Arcite. But when Arcite removes his helmet to see his lady, a miracle takes place. His horse leaps aside. Arcite is pitched upon the top of his head. His breast swells. The pain in his heart increases each moment. Arcite must die. He sends for Emily and Palamon. Theseus orders Arcite's sepulchre to be made in the grove where Arcite sang of his woe and of his love. There his bier is burnt to cold ashes. After a few years of mourning Palamon and Emily are called to parliament by Theseus. Theseus says,

"The grete tounes see we wane and wende,
Then may ye see that al thing hath ende."

And why do we still have gloom? The good Arcite, the flower of chivalry, is departed with honor. Why are his cousin and his wife in

discontent concerning his welfare? Then he advises that the two sorrows be made one perfect and everlasting joy. To Emily he says, "Lend me your hand", and to Palamon, "Come near and take your lady by the hand." Immediately in parliament follows the bond of matrimony.

Chaucer has converted the mediaeval pseudo-epic into this mediaeval romance which has lost some of the stateliness of the earlier poem. The action is more rapid. In order to produce this kind of narrative he reverses the order of some of the episodes and omits certain needless explanations and descriptions. The return of Theseus with his queen, Hypolita, and sister-in-law, Emily; the suppliant ladies of Thebes; the finding of Palamon and Arcite among the dead bodies; the lifelong imprisonment of the knights, and the infatuation of the two prisoners for Emily are all recounted in 200 lines by Chaucer. Palamon not Arcite sees Emily first. Arcite does not wander disguised as a page before he comes to Theseus' home. Of the knightly companions-at-arms of Palamon and Arcite, Chaucer banishes all but two, Lycurgus and Emetrius. The long series of minor combats he omits and yet describes vividly the confusion of the mêlée. He passes briefly over the triumph, does not mention the wedding of Arcite and Emily, and leaves out a display of great generosity on the part of Arcite when Emily and Palamon are at his bedside. The funeral is also abridged. Thus the English poet shows an independence in his introduction of changes into his romance.

Besides pruning the tedious and monotonous material that does not add to the development of the plot, Chaucer has added much new material. In this particular the poet has liberated himself from the "thraldom" of literary influence more in this poem than in his earlier

writings. In a discussion of the new elements in the Palamon and Arcite story Professor Cummings has compiled the following examples(1): the potency of May over Palamon and Arcite; the growing jealousy of the friends; the appearance of Mercury in a dream to counsel Arcite; the intervention of Saturn so that both Venus and Mars may carry out their promises to their servants; the unsuccessful efforts of leechcraft to save the wounded victor; the swooning of Emily when Arcite dies; and the parliament at Athens held to decide Theban "obeisaunce" and "alliaunce" with certain countries. These elements, however, are very essential to the weaving of the romance as we may later note in our discussion.

It is true that Chaucer has omitted a number of passages that are not inartistic and has inserted some that are less artistic. When Palamon stands by his iron barred window and beholds his beautiful lady, the scene is "almost crude". Boccaccio has Emily wandering in the garden making a garland when her sweet song attracts the ear of Arcite. Chaucer has a friend of Palamon help him to escape from prison. No previous provision is made for such a friend. Boccaccio prepares for assistance in the escape by telling us that the prisoners were given attendance of many servitors.

The technique in Chaucer's plot is in many respects superior to that of Baccaccio. Emily who is to be the wife of Palamon is seen first by him. Chaucer's sense of poetical justice leads him to this arrangement. Palamon is not apprised of Arcite's days of freedom by

---

(1) Cummings, "Indebtedness of Chaucer to Boccaccio," Ch.VI.

a friend visiting him in prison. For Palamon's information concerning Arcite Chaucer chose a happy device. Palamon is hidden in a bush when Arcite wanders through the grove singing of the month of May, of his woe, and of his love. The dramatic action of Palamon in his announcement of his presence and of his threat is followed by Arcite's avowal to bring knightly armour to his friend for their duel. The technique is further perfected by Theseus' pardoning of the knights and planning for the tournament. In the temples which he erects for the appointed day, the prayers are answered in such an artistic manner that the climax of the plot is suggested.

This transformation of episodes, introduction of new ones, and rearrangement of old ones has, moreover, altered the atmosphere of Boccaccio's poem. The pseudo-classical atmosphere gives way to a romantic atmosphere enriched by realistic touches. Mr. Robertson points out the following ear-marks of realism: Theseus' battle with Creon; the sacking of Thebes; the fetters around the shins of Palamon; Arcite's disguise first as a page and second as a squire; the armed combat of Palamon and Arcite in the grove; the description of the knights in the tournament; and the preparation for the combat. To these Professor Cummings adds a few others. The mural paintings of the temple of Mars present the mediaeval phenomena of rapine in which thousands are slain; towns are sacked, ships are burnt, and children are devoured by swine. Palamon's knights are arrayed in the style of harness according to their own opinions. The spectators at the tournament are of the mediaeval type. The heralds proclaim the victory. Arcite is treated by the practice of leechcraft. Parliament is convened by the ruler, Theseus.

Judging from all these evidences of realism the atmosphere of the plot depends not so much upon the elements of pseudo-classicism or mediaeval metrical romance as upon life itself.

Thus the Knight, who has seen many cities and has lived in the dreams of chivalry, tells us a romantic tale. He chooses for his theme the strife between brotherhood and love. Palamon and Arcite were friends from early childhood but in prison they fall in love with the same lady and so become enemies until Arcite re-knits the friendship on his death bed. The spirit of romance thus unifies the delightful plot of the "Knight's Tale". Theseus, a chivalrous conqueror, while returning with his bride, Queen Hypolita, lends a kind ear to the grief stricken widows. He chivalrously seeks a revenge for them. When Theseus comes upon the knights dueling in the grove, he quickly decides to have a tournament for the choosing of Emily. It is he who makes the elaborate preparations for the combat. He commands that only spears be used and that the wounded be carried off the field. He is not only the impartial judge, but the one to give Emily to the winner. When Arcite's death has been mourned many days, Theseus summons Emily and Palamon to parliament where he gives Emily to Palamon. Thus Theseus unifies the plot in directing the action.

The tone of tenderness and love is further sustained by the May day setting. Emily, a fair vision, does not speak, except in prayer, but plays the part of a bright shining star. Her appearance in the garden sheds upon each of the lovers her supreme radiance. The love of such a one might quickly and easily break the life-long friendship of two knights. It is on a May morning that she goes into the garden to gather white and red flowers for a garland. There in her beauty the

friends espy her. Arcite is singing a song of the month of May while he passes the bush in which Palamon is hidden. He comes thither to make a garland of the sprays in the grove. The tournament is held on a May day, fifty weeks from the knights' first combat in the grove. When Arcite is on his bier, a garland of green is on his head. Thus with these occasional touches of May the tone is sustained from the beginning to the close of the tale. Chaucer has fashioned an artistic unity through these simple and natural devices.

This poem of chivalrous ideals lived by knights and ladies in an almost fanciful world colored by a few pictures of realism is presented by many rich and varied pageants. The episodes are beautifully knit together. There is no superfluous material. With one exception Chaucer has provided for the development of his plot. The reader, perhaps, may be surprised to read that Palamon's friend aided him in his escape where there had been no previous suggestion of his friend. This point, however, is not one of prime importance. In all the other episodes we are charmed by the smoothness of the connecting links. Theseus, whom we have noted as a factor employed to unify the whole plot, is in the very first pageant. Into the city with him comes Emily to live in his home. The widows beseech Theseus to succor them. This provides for the finding of the two knights of Thebes and their imprisonment in his tower adjoining his garden in which Palamon and Arcite behold Emily. Duke Perithous comes to visit Theseus and so being a friend is granted his request. Arcite, having changed because of years of grief can easily disguise himself. Palamon, of course, does not recognize his voice which is changed but does recognize his woe which he sings. Then follows their meeting and the courtesy ren-

dered to each other. Theseus was accustomed to hunt in this grove at this hour. His chivalrous spirit in dealing with the bereaved ladies in the first scene prepares for his attitude here. The granting of the prayers offered to Venus, Diana, and Mars is very significant. They suggest the unravelling of the complications in the plot. Venus shows delay in the giving of the boon. Diana has one of the fires quenched and then relighted, while the other light is quenched just as the brand drops blood. Mars gives a dim low murmur "Victory". Again a prophecy is revealed by the opponents as they enter the lists. Arcite is mentioned first and so the outcome of the tournament is anticipated by the reader. At this point we expect Saturn to fulfill his promise to Venus. It is not the intervention but the nature of it that surprises us. The subsequent action follows the mortal wound of Arcite until we come to the last episode. Theseus who has been the motive force in the plot once more takes charge of the situation. Thus the episodes pass before us showing the growing enmity of the friends, Palamon, the dreamer, and Arcite, the man of action. It is the latter who determines the destiny. Palamon drifts with the tide. Arcite on his death bed betroths Emily to his cousin. At last friendship wins its triumph over jealousy. The reality of the mystery of life with its tragedy and its pathos is opened to us by this sequence of pictures.

What Boccaccio has told in his epic poem is condensed and changed by Chaucer into excellently proportioned episodes. The introduction of the English poem is suggestive but not drawn out too extensively. In the first 200 lines we meet Theseus, Emily, Palamon, and Arcite and are made acquainted with their dominant characteristics which mould the rest of the tale. The need and the preparations for the tourna-

ment are quickly and vividly described as I have indicated in the synopsis of the tale. After the climax Chaucer takes but a few lines to tell of the funeral. The philosophy of life in Theseus' speech leads up directly to his climax, that mourning should end and joy should begin.

After the pilgrims have listened to the Knight's interesting romance they turn an ear to the "Squire's Tale" expecting another fascinating chivalrous romance well proportioned, unified, and coherent. The Squire, living in the future, intends to accomplish greater deeds than the Knight. His life, like his tale, has charm because of its incompleteness. Unfortunately we cannot compare the two plots for the tale of the Squire is abruptly ended after it runs thus far:

The Tartar King on his wondrous steed of brass can fly in the air as high as an eagle and in a day arrive wherever he desires. He has been given on his birthday other magic gifts. There is a ring which enables one to understand the voice of all the birds and to converse with them. The magic mirror reveals all the deeds of friends or foes. The magic sword can pierce the strongest armor and has power to heal or cure. In the second part of the tale, the Tartar King's daughter, Canacee, while wearing the ring learns a tale of the falcon's unhappy love. There are to be great wars. But here the tale breaks off.

The Franklin's Tale

The "Franklin's Tale" is not only an important part of the marriage group as we have indicated above, but an artistic transition in the "Canterbury Tales". The Franklin, a prosperous country landlord, admits at the close of the "Squire's Tale" that he regrets that

his son has not the "gentillesse" of the noble Squire. But the Host becoming impatient cries out, "A straw for your 'gentillesse'! Come on and tell us a story". Perhaps the Host was still thinking of the huge forfeit agreed upon before the Pilgrims left the Tabard Inn and was trying to irritate the Franklin so that he would refuse to take part now. To the Host's request the Franklin cordially assents and shows no rebellion.

It would seem from his tale that he, if received into the Squire's company, would offend none of a refined taste. He knows a type which the gentlefolk would enjoy and so proceeds with the lay. In fact the lay differed from the fabliau, another popular form of mediaeval literature, in being intended especially for the chivalric class(1). In the twelfth century a chronicler speaks of the "aventurae nobilium" and "fabellae ignobilium". This distinction is due to the character of the public entertained by each, and to the origin. After the Norman conquest many French lays were popular in England. Later there were a few Breton "lais". In two of these, "Sir Orfeo" and "Lai le Freine", there is an excellent definition of the lay which will enable us to see why this type was thus received by the noble class. There were some lays of weal, some of woe, some of joy and mirth, some of treachery and of guile, some of old adventure, and ribauldry, and many of faery and of all things that men see, but most of love. England had an example of nearly every class. Our Franklin selects one of woe and of love for this occasion.

There was a knight in Armorica, modern Brittany, who loved his

(1) Schofield,"History of English Literature", p.180.

beautiful lady so much that he refrained from telling her his woe and distress. She, touched by his obedience and worthiness, agreed to take him for her husband and her lord. He asserted that he would not take upon him any mastery against her will nor show and jealousy; but would follow and obey her will as any lover should. She, upon seeing his gentleness, uttered a wish that no strife or war should ever come between them. They lived two years and more in blissful wedlock--during which time their love grew stronger, for there was no claim of mastery in the home--until the husband, Arveragus, felt called upon to go to England to carry on war. While the knight was absent, Dorigen, his wife, wept constantly for him. Her friends trying to comfort her invited her to walk with them along the sea shore. But as she watched the ships on the waves, she would say, "Is there no ship that will bring home my lord?" She wished that all the black rocks in the sea were sunk for his sake. The very rocks slew her heart. Seeing that this was no diversion, the friends invited her to walk, play chess, and dance in the garden. At one of the garden dances on the sixth of May there was a squire, young, strong, virtuous, rich, wise, and well beloved. It happened that this lusty squire, a servant to Venus, who was called Aurelius, had long loved Dorigen. She knew it not. He in dispair dared not tell her his sorrow and yet he could not keep it out of his songs. Nevertheless, before the merry making ended, they entered into friendly discussions. To the persistent wooer Dorigen in play replied that she would grant him her love if he would remove all the rocks from the coast of Brittany. Then answered Aurelius with a sad heart that the feat was an impossibility. He invoked Lord Phoebus to cast an eye of mercy upon him and send a flood that would cover the

highest rock in Brittany. His brother, who knew of his suffering, brought him to bed. Remembering that he had seen a book of natural magic while he was at Orleans, he went to Aurelius' bed to tell him of his plan. On the road to Orleans the brothers were met by a Breton clerk who already knew the purpose of their coming. The clerk, a magician, took them home to supper. Before they dined, the magician showed them forest and parks full of wild deer; knights jousting in a plain, and his lady in a dance. But when he clapped his hands together, all his magic disappeared. After supper Aurelius agreed to give the clerk one thousand pounds if he would remove the rocks from the coast of Brittany. That night joy again filled Aurelius' heart. When Aurelius knew that there was no obstacle--that the rocks no longer were there--he fell down at his master's feet and gave thanks to his lord and to Venus. With heart full of dread he sought his lady and reminded her of her promise in the garden. For a few days she continued to weep and to wail. On the third night of her weeping Arviragus was told the cause of her sorrow. He immediately replied that truth is the highest thing that man may keep. Having advised her to tell nobody of her adventure, he called a squire and a maiden to take her to the garden. In the town before she came to the garden, Aurelius met her and asked her where she was going. She sadly told him that her husband had budden her keep her promise. Aurelius marvelling at the generosity of Arviragus refused to let her keep her pledge saying that he would rather suffer woe than part the love of these two. Together Dorigen and Arviragus lived happily the rest of their lives and the former was true to the latter for evermore. The disappointed suitor knowing that he would have to sell his heritage to pay his magician

told the clerk of his unhappy fate. The philosopher, however, hearing the sorrow, answered that since both the knight and the squire had shown gentleness, that he too would do a gentle deed, and at once release him from the thousand pounds. Then the clerk rode away. Which was the most liberal, think you?

Chaucer's opening lines in the prologue of this tale and the setting suggest that the poet is to tell a Breton lay but no lay, treating the subject thus, is extant. Moreover, there is such a variety in the tone and spirit of the "Franklin's Tale" that it seems improbable that the lay has been derived from one source. Geoffrey of Monmouth in his "Historia Regum Britanniae" has a slight hint for part of the story but not for the plot. He records in book IV, chapters 13-16 that there is a British chieftain Arvéragus who after a successful war against the Roman general Claudius is granted the beautiful daughter of Claudius. Together they live a happy married life. Nevertheless, Geoffrey's account cannot be regarded as the source or the foundation of the Breton lay.

There is a general likeness to Chaucer's lay in the lay of "Equitan" by Marie de France. Equitan has long loved a married woman but being a friend of both the husband and wife is not suspected. He too dwells in Brittany and suffers because of his love-longing before he tells the lady of his affection. Marie de France also relates a parallel to the garden scene in the lay of "Lanval". Here the roles are reversed; the lady seeks the love of the knight. In the "Franklin's Tale", Dorigen is sorrowful because Arvéragus has not returned; in the lay of "Lanval", Lanval grieves because he is far from his "amie". Both Dorigen and Lanval are being cheered by their friends. A slighter

similarity is in her "Guildeluec and Guilliadum". Marie tells in it the story of a distinguished knight of Brittany who leaves his happy home to go to England where he carries on war. His wife like Dorigen grieves at her husband's departure.

Another motive in Chaucer's lay--the fidelity to one's plighted word--is frequently found in the early tales of the Celts. In "Sir Orfeo", a Middle English poem, which professes to be a Breton lay, the harper in disguise plays so sweetly before the king, who holds Eurydice in his land, that he is offered whatever he might wish. The harper asks for return of his wife, Eurydice. The king at first objects, but being reminded of his word grants the request.

The evidences of these analogues are not much more convincing than the following ones. Professor Skeat asserts that the ultimate source is certainly Eastern; and that we may be sure that Chaucer and Boccaccio drew their stories from very similar sources. Professor Rajna disagrees with Professor Schofield's theory that the "Franklin's Tale" was derived from a Breton lay, and yet does not offer much conclusive evidence to prove that it is drawn from Boccaccio's "Filocolo". The Italian narrative recounts no long absence of the husband from his home in Spain. Tarolfo, the passionate suitor, is promised the full enjoyment of the wife's love if he can make a garden bloom and bear fruit in January. The lover wandering off on a journey through Thessaly meets Tebano, an old herb-gather, who returns with him to his home to help him. With a magic liquid scattered over the earth, the field of January is converted by this magician, Tebano, into a flowering meadow of May. Immediately Tarolfo demands that his lady keep her pledge. Her distress, the generous husband, lover, and

magician are all closely parallel to the closing verses of the "Franklin's Tale."

Chaucer has applied these old stories of happy wedded life, the opportune appearance of the enchanter, and the fidelity to one's plighted word in a most skilful manner to his own lay. He has joined these three outstanding features into a unity though, perhaps, not a harmonious whole. Our imagination is suddenly checked in its delightful illusions for Chaucer's practical remarks quickly bring us to our common sense. His lay, therefore, is not altogether a Breton romance. At the very beginning the poet relates the gentleness of the knight to his lady and the graciousness of the lady accepting the knight as her husband and her lord. But he inserts this sly remark,

"Of swich lordship as men han over hir wyves;"

insinuating that nobody can tell beforehand or without personal experience what his wedded life will be. By a stroke of a pen the courtly sentiment is shattered by a bourgeois experience. True to knightly vows the husband feels that he must go to seek in arms worship and honor. During his absence Dorigen's friends know that her love of Arveragus is the cause of her deep sorrow,

"For his absence wepeth she and syketh,
As doon thise noble wyves whan hem lyketh."

This touch of Chaucer's humor is excelled by the following remark addressed to the married members in the pilgrimage:

"Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so moot I goon,
Ye shul it lerne, wher-so ye wole or noon".

After Dorigen has met Aurelius and has promised him her love on condition that he perform the feat, she, recalling her husband's gentleness, is

so grieved that she considers suicide,

"Hath ther not many a noble wyf, er this,
And many a mayde y-slayn hir-self, allas!"

Then she recalls a catalogue of women who died rather than sully their honor. She feels that death is the only thing that can now save her from dishonor. Knowing that the rocks are removed, Dorigen is at last unable to decide what course to pursue next. This makes the burden of the problem fall upon Arvèragus who has already promised to serve her in his best way. He, therefore, generously sacrifices his happy home in order to let her keep her troth for he says,

"Trouthe is the hyeste thing that man may kepe".

Poor Dorigen had not designated the feat in the "Filocolo," which we have already mentioned. The motive for setting that task would have been prompted by selfishness. Just the mere beauty of the garden would have satisfied her own aesthetic taste. But she did ask to have the rocks removed from the shore so that her husband's return voyage would be safer. And now her loyalty to Arvèragus has become an instrument against him. Only this attitude on the part of the husband can solve Dorigen's trouble. The squire hearing of Arvèragus' gentleness releases Dorigen, and likewise the magician, hearing of the squire's gentleness, releases the squire. Thus the motive for every important act in this lay is gentleness.

The "Franklin's Tale" is coherently fashioned. The poet provides for all the necessary links in the tale. The absence of the knight brings on the sorrow of Dorigen. Her brooding over the wave-washed sea while she strolls with her friends causes her friends to arrange another form of entertainment. The dance in the garden offers a pleasant diver-

sion for her. At this dance a former lover, the squire, makes his sorrow known to the beautiful wife. Her playful promise to him sends him away in despair. Only a magical feat can save him now. Then follows Dorigen's plaints to Fortune patterned after a mediaeval convention.(1) Perhaps this is an unnecessarily long digression. At last because of her unresourcefulness her husband has to decide for her. Following the unique account of the generosity of the three main actors involved in Dorigen's promise to Aurelius is this charming ending,

"Which was the moste free, as thinketh you?"

It was a fond amusement of the Middle Ages to discuss love and end it with a question.(2) The trouveres frequently held assemblies known as "Puys d'amour". Such discussions on the subtler subject of love occur in Boccaccio's "Filocolo". Filocolo's opinion on the first of thirteen "Questioni d'Amore" occupies most of the fourth book which we have cited above in Chaucer's sources.

The poem is well proportioned. Briefly but vividly the setting of the scene is pictured. In the first 264 verses the story leads up to the promise of Dorigen to Aurelius. Then the next third of the lay reveals the despair and sorrow of the squire, and the work of the magician. Since Dorigen's grief is the main part of the plot, it occupies most of the last third. Just a few verses tell of the gentleness so that the reader may have the joy of deciding the question.

---

(1) Chaucer draws his examples of ladies who have died rather than sully their honor from Jerome's "Epistola adversus Jovinianum".

(2) Neilson, William, Allan, "The Origins and Sources of the Court of Love", Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, Vol.VI. pp.245-248.

"The Shipman's Tale"

Having brought on the rebuke of the Parson by his oaths the host replies that he smells a "loller in the wind". Then the Shipman, who fears that the Parson will proceed to render a sermon, volunteers to tell a tale which will ring so merrily that it will waken all the company.

Chaucer here adapts the fabliau, a popular form of the middle ages. Though his tale is similar to the one in the "Decameron", his setting seems to indicate that the tale was derived from a French fabliau. In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries many fabliaux were composed in the north part of France, and doubtless their narrative art did influence Chaucer. For he, likewise, made his "Shipman's Tale" brief, interesting, and comic as we may note in this synopsis:

There was a rich Merchant dwelling at Saint Denis who had a beautiful companionable wife fond of her revelry. Among all his guests both great and small the most familiar was a Monk of thirty years. Before the Merchant went to Bruges he asked Dan John, the fair and bold monk, to come to stay a day or two with him. The guest brought a vessel of Malmsey and another of fine "vernage". For two days the Merchant and the Monk drank and played. But on the third morning the host went to his office to look over his books and stayed until nine. In the meanwhile the monk had risen and strolled into the garden. Soon the wife, his cousin, walked quietly into the garden. Seeing her, the Monk inquired what made her so pale. She replied no one was so full of dread and care as she. To relieve her of this distress he requested her to tell him all so that he could give her counsel. Not for

kinship would he do it; but out of true love. Thereupon she confided that her husband was the worst man there ever was since the world began--in fact he was not worth a fly. If the Monk would lend her one hundred francs, she could yet save her honor. Dan John promised to give her the money when her husband had gone to Flanders. It was then nine o'clock and so the wife went to the house to order the preparations of the dinner. After having enjoyed the dinner the Merchant announced that he would go the next day to Flanders. He gave his wife full directions for her comfort in his absence. To Dan John he remarked that with him he need have no strange fare. And so as soon as the wife left them alone, the Monk asked his friend, now so intimate, to lend him a hundred francs for only a week or two. Secretly the money thus was given. Then the Monk rode off to his abbey. On the next morning the Merchant journed to Bruges to buy his goods. To the Merchant's home the following Sunday Dan John with the hundred francs came and stayed that night. When the fair had ended, the Merchant returned bearing the news to his wife that the merchandise was so dear that he would have to make a contract for borrowing money on credit. This would necessitate his paying down twenty thousand "sheelds". For which sum he must go to Paris. There he met again Dan John who said that if he were rich, he would gladly lend him the money. The money which he had borrowed, he had already returned to the Merchant's wife. After borrowing the money from Lombards, the Merchant went home full of glee. The next morning he reproved his wife for not informing him that Dan John had paid her the hundred francs. Immediately she admitted having received and spent the sum but promised to repay her husband and begged him not to be wroth but to laugh and play. He, cautioning her not to be liberal anymore, forgave her.

As were the plots of the fabliaux, we see that this plot too is very simple. There is nothing in this frankly sensual story to destroy its unity. The stupidity of the husband and the cleverness of the Monk and the wife color the entire episode. To the bourgeois home is invited an old friend, Dan John, the monk, who plays the rôle of the lover. The other two usual characters in the typical fabliaux, the wife and the stupid husband, are the prominent members of this household. It is interesting to note that it is the husband who extends the invitation to the Monk who later violates the laws of hospitality. In this step of the narrative the English poet digresses somewhat from the usual design of the French fabliau. For in it the lover's presence in the home frequently was kept hidden from the husband. By a clever scheme of the wife, the lover escaped unseen as in this one: The husband came home unexpectedly. The wife turned the borrowed tub over her lover. Soon the neighbor called for his tub. When the husband picked up the overturned tub, the wife cried, "Fire"! In the great commotion that followed, the lover escaped unnoticed.

Once more the husband's generosity opens the door for the Monk's comic intrigue which was plotted in the Merchant's garden before dinner. The Monk seizes upon the host's parting words of friendship. He is bold enough to ask for the loan of one hundred francs. Willingly the host accommodates him.

It is the Merchant's trip to Bruges which offers the opportunity to the Monk for the achievement of his first comic intrigue and the preliminary plans for his second. On the Sunday of the Merchant's absence the Monk goes to Saint Denis with his hundred francs which he promised the wife. When the husband returns, he tells his wife that

the merchandise was so dear at the fair in Flanders that he must borrow money to secure a loan to pay for his goods. This necessitated the trip to Paris to see the rich Lombards. While in this city he incidentally tells Dan John of his dear merchandise. At once the Monk replies that if he were rich, he would lend his friend the twenty thousand "sheelds". Indeed, the Monk's generosity is not less than his promptness in business transactions. He tells the Merchant that he has already returned the hundred francs to his wife. And thus the Merchant serves again to help the Monk carry out the intrigue.

The Merchant returns to reprove his wife for neglecting to tell him that the money had been left with her. But her frank confession of having received and spent the money, and her promise to repay the sum, quite overwhelm him. He forgives her entirely. Thus the Merchant is the victim of the comic intrigue which his stupidity has made possible. And thus his stupidity unifies the whole fabliau.

From the beginning of the tale the end is foreseen. The situations dove-tail into each other in a perfect manner. The poet makes excellent transitions in the shifting of the scenes. All three of the places, Saint Denis, Paris, and Bruges are essential to the carrying out of the plot. The interval of time which elapses while the Merchant is at his office is devoted to the laying of the first intrigue. When he leaves his home at Saint Denis to attend the fair at Bruges, the time is used for the completion of the first intrigue which was devised to satisfy the Monk's baser love. The financial difficulties in Bruges make the Merchant's trip to Paris of great importance. This circumscribed space besides linking the parts of the story closely together appealed to the pilgrims. They had been visualizing the types in the

tale--the Monk and the Merchant--and now the reference to the well known cities made the characters more realistic. No doubt the similar religious and business man of their own pilgrimage had visited these three places. And so real characters moving in real cities heightened the amusement of the episode. The pilgrims appreciated the fact that they were not for a moment side tracked from the action of the plot to listen to a needless digression.

Professor Hart has pointed out that the typical fabliau not only has a beginning, a middle, and an end, but that the whole is well proportioned.(1) Chaucer's "Shipman's Tale" shows these characteristics. There is excellent proportion in its three divisions. The real and vivid setting comprises the first hundred and six lines. Within this "beginning" the pilgrims are introduced to the wealthy merchant, his wife, and his guest at Saint Denis. The "middle" contains the rapid conversation in the garden and the house. In these dialogues the first intrigue takes definite shape. This is followed by the second, longer and more elaborate one. There is more dialogue and more details of action in it. In this respect Chaucer conforms to the method of the jongleurs, the composers of fabliaux, who never so exhausted their powers on the first intrigue that they were compelled to treat the second one hastily. As it should be in this type, the "end" is brief. The cleverness of the wife quickly turns the laugh upon her husband.

---

(1) Hart, W.M., "The Narrative Art of the Old French Fabliaux", Kittredge Anniversary Papers, pp. 209-216.

The Prioress's Tale

The Shipman scarcely utters his last word in his story of Dan John; when the Host impressed with the moral exhorts the rest of the company to be on their guard against such tricks, and to avoid entertaining in their homes a monk. But immediately his rougher nature gives way to his more courteous manner. He turns to the Prioress and says,

"My lady Prioress, by your leve,
So that I wiste I sholde you nat greve,
I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde
A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.
Now wol ye vouche-sauf, my lady dere?"

In perfect accord with her refined character, which Chaucer has emphasized in the "Prologue", she sweetly and gently replies, "Gladly". There is a daintiness in this preciseness that arrests the attention of the pilgrims.

Chaucer now turns to a Miracle of the Blessed Virgin, a favorite form of legend in the middle ages, and one very suitable for the Prioress. The Latin collection of this type made in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was soon translated into French. Later many miracles were collected by Jean le Merchant; sixty were written by Everard de Gateley; and a group was composed by an Anglo Norman. The most representative group of Mary Miracles in England, the Vernon miracles, collected in the fourteenth century contains one which is similar to Chaucer's, and which we may refer to later.

To understand the spirit of the Prioress's tale we must recall the early antipathy which the Christians felt for the Jews. We need

not go, however, into a detailed account of the pages of European history stained with the senseless persecution. It seems possible that the Jews having been persecuted sought revenge by the murder of Christian children. The middle ages widely believed that the Jews during Passion Week decoyed Christian children into their homes to either crucify or murder them outright. The blood was used in some gruesome religious ceremony.

The pilgrims knowing this view of the Jews and being fond of a Miracle of the Blessed Virgin listen intently as the Prioress tells this story:

"O Lord, our Lord, thy name is marvelous", quoth the Prioress. "Of thee and of thy white lily, will I tell my tale." To the Virgin Mary she cried, "Help me to tell it in thy reverence. My skill is weak to declare thy great worthiness. Therefore guide my song".

There was in Asia in a great city among Christian folk, a Jewery, sustained by a lord of that land for the sake of foul usury and villainous lucre. It was hateful to Christ and to his company. Men might go through its street, which was free and open at either end. Down at its farther end Christian folk had a little school in which Christian children learned to sing and to read. There was among these children a widow's son, a little clerk, seven years of age, who went day by day to school. He was taught whenever he saw the image of Christ's mother to kneel down, and to say "Ave Marie". Always he remembered this teaching of his mother. As the little child sat in school learning his primer, he heard the older children singing "O Alma Redemptoris". Nearer he drew until he had learned the first verse. He was too young to know the meaning of the Latin lines and so one day he had his comrade

explain them to him. Then he said, "I with diligence will learn it all. Even though for my primer I shall be punished, and shall be beaten thrice in an hour, I will learn it in order to honor our Lady." On his way home from day to day his companion taught him. Finally he could sing it well and boldly going and coming from school. Through the Jewery the little child walked singing merrily, "O Alma Redemptoris."

Our first foe, the serpent, Sathanas, having a wasp's nest in a Jew's heart, said, "O Hebrew people, alas, is this to you an honest thing, that such a boy shall walk as he pleases in your despite and sing of such matter which is against the reverence due to our law?" From that moment the Jews conspired to chase this innocent out of the world. They hired a homicide, who had a privy place in his alley, to seize the boy as he would pass by and hold him fast, cut his throat, and cast him into the pit. But

"Mordre wol out, certein, it wol not faille,
And namely ther th' enour of god shal sprede,
The blood out cryeth on your cursed dede".

The poor widow waited all night for her son to return from school. At dawn with pale face and troubled mind she went to the school, and other places until she learned that he was last seen in the Jewery. With mother's pity in her breast she in a daze searched and prayed. She asked of the Jews to tell her if they had seen her child go by. They said, "Nay". But Jesus made her think that her son was cast into a pit beside the place where she stood. At once the little boy began to sing "Alma Redemptoris". The Christian folks going through the street heard the song and hastily sent for the chief magistrate. The Jews let them take the child up who kept singing his

piteous lamentation. To the next abbey they carried him. His mother swooning fell by the bier. With torment and a shameful death, the chief magistrate caused each one of the Jews who knew of the murder to perish.

Upon the bier lay the innocent before the altar during the Mass. After the holy water had been sprinkled upon him, the child sang "O Alma Redemptoris Mater". The abbot asked the child why he continued to sing with his throat cut. "My throat is cut to the neck-bone", said the little boy, and naturally I should have died, but Jesus Christ wills that his glory be remembered, and for the worship of his dear mother, I yet sing, "O Alma" loud and clear. And when I should have given up my life, she came to me and bade me sing this anthem in my death, as you have heard. She laid a grain under my tongue. Therefore, I sing in honor of that blessful Lady until this stone is taken from my mouth. After that she will take me".

The abbot removed the stone. The child gave up the ghost. And down the abbot's cheeks trickled salt tears.

In the legend of Alphonsus of Lincoln, a French poem contained in the collection of Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Gautier de Coincy, and in an English poem of 152 lines from the "Miracles of Oure Lady" there are the following stories which offer interesting similarities to Chaucer's poem. Each tells the story to the greater glory of the Virgin Mary. The boy's singing to her brings on the murder of the Jews. She is the one who produces the miracle which betrays the murder. In each the innocent's mother goes to seek the little boy. In the first and the last of these three versions the little boy sings "Alma Redemptoris Mater" and is thrown into a wardrobe. The second agrees with Chaucer's tale in recording that the anthem is learned at school. On

the whole the first resembles Chaucer's tale the nearest but since it was issued after Chaucer's, it seems that the version which Chaucer used is not extant.

The Prioress relates an admirably unified story. No wonder the pilgrims could neither command their thoughts nor trust their voices when she had finished. The pathetic story throughout had touched the hardest heart. From the first episode until the last the listeners and the readers today are impressed with the simplicity and innocence of the little boy. Even the story teller assumes an unaffected meekness and child-like attatude to the Blessed Virgin,

"For to declare thy grete worthinesse,
That I ne may the weighte nat sustene
But as a child of twelf monthe old, or lesse,"

and thereby lends an atmosphere of reverence and simplicity before she tells the sweet child's episode. The underlying tone of tenderness is not forced but very natural and therefore makes us feel in spite of the miracle that we have been hearing a chapter of a little boy's life. He is a poor widow's son of seven years. Obediently he kneels down whenever he sees the image of Christ's mother and says,"Ave Maria". He is too young to know the meaning of the Latin lines of "O Alma Redemptoris" but, nevertheless, he is attracted by the rhythm of them. After he is told the translation, he connects it with his previous knowledge of the Virgin Mary and likes it better than ever. He is a bright child and readily masters the lines taught by his companion. He is also a brave little boy for he says that he must learn them to honor our Lady, even though he knows that he will be beaten thrice in an hour for it. His sweet young voice rings clear the words as he passes through the Jewery.

By a contrast Chaucer deepens our sympathy for the innocent. The serpent, Sathanas, who has a wasp's nest in a Jew's heart, incites his fellow men to cruelty. Moreover, the Jews hire a homicide to cut the little boy's throat. After this the mother with a loving heart and pale cheeks goes forth to seek her lost son. When she enters the abbey, she swoons beside his bier. The abbot too is touched with genuine pathos. Down his cheeks trickle tears. Thus there is no exaggeration but a gentle sweet tenderness intermingled with this human aspect.

Furthermore, there is a delicate coherence in this plot. Nearly every line is necessary for the understanding of what follows. The silence of the pilgrims suggests that the very best attention was required for the full appreciation of the "Prioress's Tale". In the first few verses the description of the lord of the Jewery and his district hints on impending danger to the Christian school which is at one end of the street running through the Jewery. In this Christian school is a widow's son who learns to sing part of "O Alma Redemptoris". Having learned all of it he goes back and forth to school through this district with the song ever upon his lips. The intolerant Jews immediately plot to put him out of the world. One day while going merrily through their quarters, he is seized by a homicide and cast into a pit. The widow passes the first night in anxiety. In the morning she begins her search until she finds him in a pit. The persecution of the Jews is only incidentally mentioned for the sake of poetical justice. For the ending of the Prioress's plot the Mass and the little boy's explanation of his singing after death are the most logical incidents. They are the only two scenes that we feel are left to completely close his innocent life.

Chaucer's sense of proportion is excellent in the "Prioress's Tale". The first seventy lines have introduced us clearly and sympathetically to the Jewery, the poor widow, and the little boy who loves the Virgin Mary. To the innocent's sweet, simple, trusting nature the poet devotes eight full stanzas before he touches the tragic murder. Especial stress is laid on the learning of the song which is to be the child's destruction. Even a few lines are taken up with the character of the older fellow who teaches the little child, to show that the former lacks the divine spark of the latter. In the next two stanzas the conspiracy and the murder are recorded. But twice as many lines picture the mother's sorrow, until she hears her son singing "Alma Redemptoris". From this point on to the close the story reveals the tender love of the Virgin Mother who succors the child in his death, for thus the little boy explains his song,

"This antem verraily in my deyinge,
As ye han herd, and, whan that I had songe,
Me thoughte, she leyde a greyn up-on my tonge.
Wherfor I singe, and singe I moot certeyn
In honour of that blisful mayden free,
Til fro my tonge of-taken is the greyn;
And afterward thus seyde she to me,
'My litel child, now wol I fecche thee.'"

"The Nun's Priest's Tale"

The Knight's courteous objection during the Monk's dismal tragedies is seconded by this abrupt objection from the Host: "Sir Monk, no more of this. Such talking is not worth a butterfly. If it

were not for the clinking of the bells on your horse's bridle, I would have fallen asleep and have dropped into the deep spring mud." To enliven the rest of the pilgrims who have been bored likewise by this last weary tale, the Host singles out the Nun's Priest to tell a story that will make all of their hearts glad. One of the distinguished pilgrims, the lordly Monk, has failed to amuse the motley crowd, and so an obscure member whom the poet did not describe in the "Prologue" is assigned this special duty.

But Chaucer has not overlooked him but has reserved for him the fable, a type popular from the remotest antiquity, which according to La Fontaine's definition is capable of producing the very effect desired by the Host:

"Fables in sooth are not what they appear;
Our moralists are mice, and such small deer.
We yawn at sermons, but we gladly turn
To moral tales, and so amused we learn."

The primitive form of literature arose from the universal impulse of men to express their thoughts in concrete images. Again referring to La Fontaine we find that the fable or apologue is composed of a body and a soul; the former is the narrative in which are irrational or inanimate beings feigned to act and speak with human interest, and the latter is the morality. It is interesting to note, however, that the earliest beast-fable, the progenitor of the Aesopian fable, was minus the moral. In the East, the long recognized land of the myth and the legend, is the natural home of the fable with Hindustan as the birthplace of those extant. Aesop, it seems, lived in the sixth century B.C. though probably

his fables were never written down. Besides adaptations of Aesop there are many original ones composed by Marie de France in the thirteenth century. The expansion of her "Don Coc et don Werpil" is Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale". This story has been traced to the History of Reynard the Fox. Grimm found this beast-epic dating back to the tenth century. The first example is the Latin, then the German, "Reinecke Fuchs", and in the thirteenth century the French, "Roman de Renert". The second Miss Peterson concludes is the closest to Chaucer's fable. This we may compare later in our discussion of the plot structure of Chaucer's poem filled with such fresh-hearted gayety:

There was a poor widow, somewhat bent in age who dwelt in a poor cottage standing in a dale beside a grove. This widow had led a simple life for little was her cattle and her rent to keep herself and her two daughters. No dainty morsel passed through her throat but only milk, brown bread, bacon, and sometimes an egg or two. In her yard enclosed with sticks and a dry ditch she had a cock named Chanticleer which had not an equal for crowing. His crowing in his lodging was more certain than a clock or an abbey horologe. Redder than the fine coral was his comb embattling, as it seemed, a castle wall. This gentle cock had in his government seven hens, either his sisters or his wives. The fairest hued in her throat was Pertelote, courteous, discreet, debonair, and sociable. Of all the rest he loved her best and sang in sweet accord with her, "My beloved is gone away". For in those days beasts and birds could speak and sing. It happened one morning while they were all sitting upon the perch in the hall, that Chanticleer began to groan in his throat as a man would when he is sorely troubled in his dreams. Hearing him Pertelote was aghast and said, "Dear heart,

what ails you to groan in this manner?" To her he replied, "Do not take it in sorrow. I dreamed that while I was roaming up and down within our yard, I saw a beast with a color between yellow and red which sprang upon me. This without doubt caused me to groan."

"Away!" quoth Pertelot, "fie on you, coward. No wife desires a husband afraid of every weapon. Have you no man's heart? Dreams are nothing but vanity. Cato, a wise man, said, 'Take no heed of dreams! When we fly from our perch, I shall show you herbs which will have the property to purge you".

Chanticleer returned that he had many authorities who believed the contrary to this theory. "Cicero relates the story of two friends, one who slept in an ox's stall and the other who lodged elsewhere. The latter dreamed that his friend was murdered in the stall and the next morning found his dead body hid in a cart. In the same book is another tale of a wondrous dream. One of two friends dreams the night before they are to sail that they are drowned on their morning voyage. He prays the other to delay the trip a few days. But his friend only laughs and scorns him saying, 'No dream makes my heart so aghast that I will delay to do my business. Dreams are but vanities.' Yet before this latter one sails half his course, the ship is rent and down goes the sailor into the sea. Therefore, Pertelote, so dear, by these old examples may you learn that men should not be reckless of dreams. Again in the life of St. Kenelm, I read how Kenelm dreamed before his murder, that he saw in a vision his own murderer. I too shall have of my vision adversity. As for your herbs I love them never a bit. Now let us speak of mirth and stop all of this".

"I have great bliss", Chanticleer said, "when I behold you so

fair. Woman is man's joy and bliss. Moreover, when I feel at night your soft side, I have such solace that I defy dreams and visions". Down he flew for it was dawn, and all his hens with a cluck he called to enjoy the grain which he had found. Royal he was and no more afraid. Thus as royal as a prince in his hall we leave Chanticleer in his pasture with his ladies.

A col-fox, full of sly iniquity which had dwelt in the grove three years, broke through the hedge the same night that Chanticleer dreamed this dream, and lay in the bed of herbs in the yard until his time to murder the cock would come. He waited just as homicides who lie in ambush to murder men.

Chanticleer had been warned by his dream. But whether God's worthy foreknowledge compelleth one necessarily to do a thing, or man with free choice does that same thing or rejects it, though God foreknows it before it is wrought; are matters set aside now, for the tale is of the cock who took his counsel of his wife with sorrow as did Adam.

In the sand bathing in the sun sang Chanticleer, Pertelote, and all her sisters. As Chanticleer cast his eye upon a butterfly in the herbs, he espied this fox lying low. The fox cried, "Cock, Cock!" as if he were frightened and ready to flee from an enemy. But when the cock would flee, the fox said, "Gentle sir, where will you go. I am your friend. I have come to hear your merry voice. Your father with his eyes shut sang better than any one. Let us see if you can counterfeit your father." Ravished with flattery and not suspecting the treason, Chanticleer beat his wings, shut his eyes, and crowed lustily. The fox rushed up seized him by the neck and bore him upon his back

into the wood.

When Pertelote had seen the sight she shrieked louder than Hasdrubale's wife. Having heard the hens, the silly widow and her two daughters ran out of the door. The cock upon the fox's back they saw, and cried, "Ha, ha, fox!" as they, joined by their neighbors, chased the thief. Like fiends in hell they all yelled. The ducks squawked as if they were being killed by men. For fear, the geese flew over the trees. And out of the hives came a swarm of bees.

Upon the fox's back the cock lying in all dread spoke to the fox saying, "If I were you, I would say, 'Turn back you followers for in spite of all you can do, the cock shall here abide. I will eat him in faith.'" While the fox repeated these words, the cock broke swiftly from his mouth and flew high upon a tree. Seeing that he had gone the fox called out, "O Chanticleer, I seized you with no wicked intention. Come down and I shall tell you what I meant." "Nay," cried Chanticleer, "not more than once will you beguile me. You shall no more through flattery make me sing and wink with my eyes. For he who winks when he should see, will have misfortune". "Nay", said the fox, "but God gives him ill luck who is so indiscreet as to prate when he should hold his tongue."

But you who hold this tale to be but a "folye" of a fox, or a cock, or a hen take the morality thereof, good men.

The plot though very slight is artistically unified. Its key-note is pride. Since this quality serves both for the entanglement and for the denouement, nearly all the stress is laid upon the portrayal of character. Chaucer's sly humorous satire in the description of the uxorious Chanticleer gives a sparkle to the general tone and reminds us

constantly that the husband is a fowl. Moreover, his satire is of a mock heroic style. Within the hen coop are domestic situations. Pertelote is solicitous of her husband's welfare. When Chanticleer is timid, frightened by his dream, she is cool just like Lady Macbeth. It is Chanticleer who thinks dreams are a portent of evil; and Pertelote who says that he needs medicine. Chanticleer like Macbeth is imaginative; but Pertelote is scientific. For her authority on dreams Pertelote can cite just a school book, while for his authorities Chanticleer draws from extensive and deep readings. He cannot resist rolling the high sounding Latin words under his tongue even if he is compelled to mistranslate them to keep his wife's good favor. As a royal knight he calls his lady to enjoy the grain of corn. His strutting and his crowing remind us during her feast that the knight and lady are fowls. Pertelote has received Chanticleer's praise of her beauty and her sympathy and has not once suppressed his egotism. Along comes the fox and takes advantage of this dominant characteristic. But the table is turned, when Chanticleer makes use of his knowledge of human nature to regain his freedom.

In the coherence of this poem Chaucer has improved on his sources. He places the dream of Chanticleer before the espying of the fox. The pleasure of anticipating the danger adds much to the narrative. The movement is retarded in "Romulus". Pinte sees the fox and then wakens Chanticleer who tells of his dream. Chaucer introduces a butterfly hovering over the herbs in which the fox lies hidden. This attracts Chanticleer's eye as he looks about to find food for his wives. Immediately the two opposing forces come face to face. The trap is laid, the chase takes place, and the excitement is lively. A-

gain the cock is the center of attraction and his pursuers offer the means for his escape. From the din that comes to his ears he knows they are there. Quickly he advises the fox to shout his victory. And, at that very moment, he flys to the trees.

The humorous setting forms the greatest portion of the fable so that there will be ample time for the delineation of character without which the entanglement would be less fascinating. The opposing character enters in the last fourth of the poem. The movement from that point is rapid. No delay is necessary for description of situations. Everything has been accounted for. The general uproar of the chase holds sway. Almost at the very close is the climax. Chanticleer frees himself from the fox's jaws and shouts back his triumph from the branches.

"The Pardoner's Tale"

The Host, who takes upon his shoulders the burden of voicing the general sentiment of the pilgrims, now remarks at the close of the Physician's tragic account of Virginia that it has caused his heart to be so sad that he feels the need of a restorative draught of new and corny ale, or a merry tale. Therefore, he calls to the Pardoner,

"Tel us som mirthe or japes right anon".

"It shall be done", the Pardoner rejoins. But, hereupon, the pilgrims take a hand in the request. The Host has assumed too much this time. In truth, he has reckoned without his company. "Nay! let him tell us of no ribaldry but of a moral thing", they demand.

Waiting for no further orders from the Host the Pardoner says that he, while drinking in the way-side tavern, now reached, will think upon some honest thing. Frankly he tells the pilgrims how he

preaches in his own pulpit. In a haughty manner he addresses his own congregation. His theme is always "Radix malorum est cupiditas". First he announces whence he has come; shows his bulls from the Pope, and tells his tales interspersed with a few Latin words to color his sermon and to stir men to devotion. Then he compels offerings to his false relics. Of avarice and such cursedness he preaches. But his intentions are to win silver from his people, not to correct their sins. He himself is guilty of avarice and he preaches only because he is covetous. He always used many exempla of old stories because people like old tales best. Now the Pardoner, a full vicious man, having by this time refreshed himself with a draught of corny ale, tells a moral tale which he is accustomed to deliver.

As we shall note in the "Nun's Priest's Tale" the moral of the sermon is there, too, emphasized by a story illustrating it. Chaucer has read and listened to many such forms of sermons; but we have no definite source for this one. The story,however, in the "Pardoner's Tale" is of Eastern origin. From a very early date the story became popular. Its earliest form is the collection of Hindoo tales entitled "Vedaboha Jataka".(1) In Parsian , Arabic, Hashmiri, and Tibetan are other versions of it. More recent versions are written in Italian, German, French, Portuguese, and Latin. The one which closest resembles Chaucer's is the version in the "Cento Novelle Antiche" which probably antedates another similar tale found in Boccaccio's, the "Tenth Tale of the Sixth Day of the Decameron". Its interesting similarity to Chaucer's

---

(1) Root, "The Poetry of Chaucer", p. 224.

poem to which we may refer later will help us to appreciate the skill of the English poet in constructing the plot of the "Pardoner's Tale". The story is as follows:-

In Flanders was a company of young folk who practiced folly. With riotous living, dice playing, music, and dancing they made merry. The world is corrupt with gluttony, drinking, gambling, swearing and homicide. These riotous three of whom we spoke sat drinking in a tavern when they heard the tinkle of a bell, which was being carried before a corpse. One of the three called to a boy and asked him to find out who was dead. The knave replied that the body was one of their own company who had been slain by Death. Death, who doubtless dwelt in the village, had slain a thousand within the last year. Then one of the three proposed that they all three become sworn friends and live and die for each other as brothers would; and go forth to slay Death. And so they went forth toward the village. After they had gone about a half mile they met a poor old man whom they asked to protect them. The old man had been tapping the ground with his staff and calling for mother earth to receive him; but Death did not want him. One of the gamesters said to him, "You speak of the traitor Death who has slain all of our friends in this country. Tell us where he is"."Turn up this crooked road leading into the grove and there under an oak he abides", answered the stranger. Under the tree they found fine florins of gold--about eight bushels. Down they sat and sought no longer for Death. The worst spoke first: "Let us spend the money as lightly as we found it. The one whom we choose by lot will go to town to buy us bread and wine." To the youngest fell the lot. While he was gone, one of the two who stayed to guard the treasure explained a plan to the

other. "When the youngest returns", he said, "you arise as if you were going to play with him, and I shall thrust a dagger into his side. Then we shall divide the florins between us." The younger, too, thought that he would like the treasure for himself. To the apothecary he would go to buy poison. He would tell that he wanted it to destroy vermin that troubled him at night. Then acting upon this thought he bought the poison and borrowed three large bottles. Into two he poured the deadly drug. The third he kept clean for his drink. When he had filled them all with wine, he returned to the rioters. As the two had planned, they slew the youngest. When this was done, they drank the wine. Both died. "O cursed sin, full of cursedness!" the Pardoner adds. "Come up you wives and make your offering. I have your names on the roll. Here are my relics. If you wish to have absolution, you may now come to kneel down. Host, with you I shall begin, for you are most involved in sin."

The Host refuses to kiss the relics. But, however, the Knight prevents a quarrel by advising the Host to kiss the Pardoner. This they do. And all ride on their happy way.

This exemplum, one of Chaucer's best stories, is cleverly devised. The evil of covetousness is the main thread of the sermon. With a delightfully unified story the theme is illuminated so vividly and so emphatically that the audience think that they have been reading a leaf out of their own history. For to them the ravages of the pestilence is a personal experience. The four (1) in Edward III's reign have not been forgotten. In the days of such danger many gave themselves up to religious exercises, others to dissipation. Those who were spared the terrible plague drifted closer together. And so in Flanders, a town renowned for drinking, the three who are reveling in the tavern naturally

(1) The ones in 1348-49, 1361-63; 1369; 1375-76.

plot to avenge Death who has taken their associate. Moreover, they plight their troth to live and die each for the other. This last incident has a second significance. Like the friendship of Palamon and Arcite it is a survival in literature of the very ancient institution of the fratres jurati. One might cite further the friendship of "Achilles and Patroclus", and "Nysus and Euryalus". The "Cento Novelle Antiche" does not contain the tavern setting which Chaucer employs to give the tone to the whole poem. The pilgrims are thus enabled to see the gloom of inevitable death which overshadows the rioters before they are introduced to the old man, not a hermit as in the Italian "Novelle". The resignation of old age increases by contrast the impetuousness of youth. Death will not receive him; Death will not wait for the three revelers who seek to slay him. When the three are told where the false traitor is, they run to meet him. Again Chaucer makes another discrimination in his choice of detail. The sturdiness of the oak instead of the ease of the "grandissima grotto" suggests a rougher atmosphere which immediately pervades this third scene of his story. And instead of "molto oro" he specifies that there are bushels of florins so that the coins can be used at once to buy the poison and wine to end the episode. Chaucer even characterizes the three rioters for the sake of plot development. It is the most wicked one who suggests the trip to town for bread and drink. In order to maintain the respect for the three a little longer there is no hint that the plighted troth is on the verge of being broken. No one is singled out to go on the errand. Chance decides that the youngest should go. First the two overcome by greed break the vow of friendship. Then the youngest is seized by covetousness beyond his strength of honor. The irony of

fate closes the tale. The sword is turned against them all. Alas, the provisions that would have lasted for days, profits none of them.

The "Pardoner's Tale" is artistic in its coherence. No superfluous details hinder the rapid sweep of death. In the prologue there is a lack of seriousness in the Pardoner's acknowledgement that he is avaricious. He is personally aware how this sin grips one in its vise. This is the key to his tale. The company in Flanders introduced at the very beginning of his stock sermon is very effective. For after the evils of drinking, gambling, swearing, homicide have been mentioned, the Pardoner returns to his story by recalling to his audience's minds that there are three revelers of whom he has already told them. The limited number of three in the tavern now provides for the death of the thousand and the associate which took place while the three in their drunkenness were unconscious of their environment. Then Drunkenness (705), Blasphemy (708-9), and Hazardry (1.751) journey hand in hand until they reach their climax in Homicide prompted directly by Avarice. The story ends so swiftly that the rapidity of death is impressive. To enforce his argument the Pardoner adds a peroration (1) when he addresses his hypothetical congregation. And at last he ends (2) as he begins:

"Now, goode men, god forgeve you your trespas,
And ware you fro the sinne of avaryce."

Chaucer has kept his audience clearly in mind in determining the artistic proportions of the sermon and tale. The abstract terms of sin in the didactic digression begin to become a little monotonous and so the Pardoner breaks off after he has delivered about one third of his

---

(1) The Works of Chaucer (1.895-99)
(2) (1.954-905)

sermon to give his exemplum. In this the tavern setting is briefly described. The realistic conversation between the old man and the revelers leads up to the finding of the treasure. There is just enough matter to explain the dispatching of the youngest. The plotting of the two others is not so elaborate as that of the youngest, because his scheme, being the main pivot upon which the dénouement turns, should naturally receive the greater treatment. At the close of the story the action is very rapid. Avarice not death is the theme and so death must have but a brief line or two. Without the peroration the sermon is unfinished. But of course it is short. The Pardoner must not weary his congregation for he has yet to invite them to offer their silver.

Chapter IV.

Conclusion

The development of Chaucer's genius in narrative art is very obvious in the above plots. We have been able to point out many borrowings from French and Italian models for his early stories, but we have found few if any direct originals for his later ones. His method of treating suggestions is, moreover, much freer in the "Canterbury Tales". Besides he enlivens the material with more humor. And best of all his characters are less conventional. They now seem much nearer to life. Chaucer like Shakespeare held the "mirror up to nature" and showed the very age in which he lived. As a lover of all human nature he omitted neither great nor low; neither old nor young in his narratives. He has written of knights and ladies, and cooks and plowmen; of an old man longing for Mother Earth to receive him, and of a devout little boy. The charm of the complications or causally connected series of events in his stories has depended largely on his true interpretation of the motives of this wide range of characters. For instance in the "Book of the Duchesse" it was the knight's grief that caused the poet to assume the innocent rôle so that he could comfort the bereaved one. Thus it was the delineation of character that bound the parts of the story together into the unity of passion and sympathy. Knowing his characters so perfectly Chaucer does not shock us with incongruities but fascinates us with his artistic unity, coherence, and proportion.

In judging his coherence we must not lose sight of the literary demands of his own age. There were many conventions that had to be respected, such as we have previously mentioned. The people were accustomed to them and felt that the narratives were dull and impoverished

without them. If we attempt to read these poems without a knowledge of knighthood, the system of courtly love, the psychology of dreams, the exempla of the homilies, the fable, the fabliau, the lay, and the miracles of the Virgin so popular in the literature in the Middle Ages, we may be deprived of the significant relation of some of the best phrases, scenes, and episodes in the plots. We are then inclined to judge such passages as mere digressions. Critics have culled out some prominent phrases as not orderly and logical in their sequence which we have indicated above to be vital to the unfolding of the plot because we measured the tales by the mediaeval standards in literature.

The proportion of Chaucer's narratives has been a point of much dispute. Critics again lose sight of the particular nature of the plot. For example in the "House of Fame" we are to keep in mind that we have an account of a journey. The narrator, therefore, has the liberty to dwell at length on some stages of his flight to the House of Fame, and to pass rapidly over others, according to the impression that the incidents make upon him. Particularly noteworthy is the proportion in the "Nun's Priest's Tale". The entanglement and the denouement occupy but a very few lines. However, the poet has a good reason for such a distribution of material. Artfully he presents the lesson on pride in the plot by the elaborate humorous delineation of Chanticleer's domestic character which precedes it.

After such a study of Chaucer's plots which thus picture the cause and effect of human action, we are impressed with the opinion of Professor Kittredge that Chaucer "found no answer to the puzzle of life but in truth and courage and beauty and belief in God." (1)

(1) Kittredge, G.L., "Chaucer and His Poetry", pp.218.

Bibliography

"Alphonsus of Lincoln", Chaucer Society Originals and Analogues, London, pp.251-276.

Canby, H.S., "Some Comments on the Sources of Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale", Modern Philology, vol.2, pp.260-277.

Chaucer, G., "The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer", edited by W.W. Skeat, Oxford, 1894. vol. I-VI.

"Chaucerian and Other Pieces, being a Supplement to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer", edited by W.W.Skeat, Oxford, 1899.

Cook, A.S., "The Character of Criseyde", Modern Language Association New Ser. vol. 15, pp.531-547.

Courthope, W.J., "A History of English Poetry", New York, 1895, pp.260-265.

Cummings, H.M., "The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio" (A Review and Summary), Menasha, Wis., 1916.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., 1910, vol.VI, pp.13-17; vol.X, pp. 114-117.

Fansler, D. S., "Chaucer and the 'Roman De La Rose'", New York, 1914.

Garrett, A.C., "Studies on Chaucer's House of Fame", Harvard Studies, vol.5, pp.150-175.

Hammond, E.P., Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual, New York, 1908.

Hart, W.M., "The Narrative Art of the Old French Fabliaux", Kittredge Anniversary Papers, Boston, 1913, pp.209-216.

___"The Pardoner's Tale" and "Der Dot inn Stock", Modern Philology, vol.9, pp.17-22.

Hinckley, H.B., "The Debate on Marriage in the 'Canterbury Tales'",

Modern Language Association, New Ser.25, pp.292-306.

Jones, H.S.V., "The Plan of the 'Canterbury Tales'", Modern Philology, vol.13,pp.45-48.

Ker, W. P., "Essays on Medieval Literature", London, 1905.

Kittredge, G. L.,"Chaucer and His Poetry", Cambridge, 1915

_____"Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage", Modern Philology, vol.9, pp.435-467.

_____"Chaucer's Lollius", Modern Language Review, vol.13, pp.240-241.

_____"Chaucer's 'Medea' and Date of the Legend of Good Women", Mod. Lang. Ass., New Ser. vol. 17, pp.343-363.

_____"Chauceriana", Modern Philology, vol. 7, pp.465-486.

_____"Guillaume de Machaut and the Book of the Duchess", Mod. Lang. Ass., New Ser., vol.23, pp. 1-25.

Laurence, William, W., "The Marriage Group in the 'Canterbury Tales'", Mod. Phil. vol. XI, pp.246-258.

Legouis, Emile, "Geoffrey Chaucer", London, 1892, vol. I-III.

Lowes, J.L., "Chaucer and Dante", Modern Philology, vol.14, pp.704-735.

_____"Chaucer and the 'Miroir de Mariage'", Modern Philology, vol.8, pp.165-186; 305-334.

_____"Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins", Modern Language Association, New Series, vol.28, pp.237-271.

_____"Franklin's Tale", "Teseide", and "Filocolo", Modern Philology, vol.15, pp.689-728.

_____"The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women", Modern Language Association, New Ser. vol.12, pp.693-683.

Mather, F.J., "The Prologue, The Knight's Tale, and the Nun's Priest's Tale", Chicago,1899.

Moulton, "The Library of Literary Criticism", New York, vol.1, pp.124-171.

Neilson, Wm. A., "The Origins and Sources of the Court of Love", Harvard Studies, vol.6.

Percy's Reliques, ed. by Prichard, J.V., London, 1900, vol.II, pp.112.

Price, T.R., "Troilus and Criseyde", Modern Language Association, New Ser. vol.4, pp.307-322.

Root, Robert K., "Chaucer's Dares", Modern Philology, vol.15, pp.1-22.

_____"Chaucer's Legend of Medea", Modern Language Association, New Ser.vol.17, pp.124-153.

_____"The Poetry of Chaucer", Boston and New York, 1906.

Saunders, "Chaucer's Canterbury Tales," London, 1889.

Schofield, W.H., "Chaucer's 'Franklin's Tale'", Modern Language Association, New Ser. vol.9, pp.445-49.

_____"History of English Literature From the Norman Conquest to Chaucer", N.Y., 1906.

Sypherd, Wilbur, O., "Studies in Chaucer's Hous of Fame", London, 1907 for the issue of 1904.

Ten Brink, B., "Early English Literature", New York, 1892.

Tupper, F., "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins", Modern Language Association, New Ser. vol.22, pp.93 ff., 128 ff.

Ward, H.S., "The Canterbury Pilgrimages", London, 1904.

Wells, John Edwin, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, Yale U. Press, 1916.

_____First Supplement, 1919

Williams, W.H., "Palamon and Arcite and the Knight's Tale", Modern Language Review, Vol.IX, pp.309-323.

Young, Karl, "The Plan of the Canterbury Tales", Kittredge Anniversary Papers, London, 1913, pp.405-417.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 099086479